

A decorative rectangular border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in black ink, framing the central text.

The Problem of  
Religion

EMIL CARL WILM, PH.D.



BL 51 .W74 1912  
Wilm, Emil Carl, 1877-1932.  
The problem of religion



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2008 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



# THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

By EMIL CARL WILM.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FRIEDRICH SCHILLER.

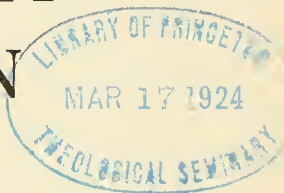
THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION.

THE CULTURE OF RELIGION.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HENRI BERGSON.

TRANSLATION OF KLEMM, GESCHICHTE DER PSYCHOLOGIE.  
(*In preparation.*)

# THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION



By ✓

EMIL CARL WILM, PH.D.

Professor of Philosophy in Wells College. Formerly Fellow  
in Philosophy, Cornell University, and Assistant  
in Philosophy, Harvard University.

Play no tricks upon thy soul, O man!  
Let fact be fact, and life the thing it can.

— *Clough.*



THE PILGRIM PRESS  
BOSTON    NEW YORK    CHICAGO

*Copyright, 1912*  
BY LUTHER H. CARY

THE RUMFORD PRESS  
CONCORD · N · H · U · S · A.



To

JOHN R. ALLEN, D.D.

A SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN WHO COMBINES  
FREEDOM OF THOUGHT WITH  
ESSENTIAL JUSTICE  
OF LIFE  
MY FIRST TEACHER OF PHILOSOPHY  
THIS BOOK  
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED



## PREFACE

THE little book presented here is not a treatise on theological apologetics in an old sense of the term. I have rather been interested to trace out, in a way which would be fairly consonant with our present knowledge, and satisfactory to my own scientific conscience, the natural implications of our common and our scientific experience with a view to seeing what justification could be given for a religious conception of the world, independently of revelation, or of any other cabalistic sources of religious truth. My way has not been an entirely new way. If it were, it would rightly be under suspicion. The philosophical reader will likely miss many of the refinements of modern philosophical speculation, and any distinct recognition of the very energetic reaction to idealism, of which (I trust he will believe) I am not entirely innocent. To the essential truth in pragmatism, that new version of a very ancient way of thinking, I have indeed tried to do justice. What I have endeavored to do is to present, in as

## P R E F A C E

---

simple a manner as the subject would bear, the idealistic tradition in its best known historical forms as bequeathed to us by Berkeley and Kant. I have tried, in the second place, to incorporate with this the essential features of modern voluntaristic philosophy with its rightful emphasis upon the purposive and active aspects of our experience, and the closely related tendencies in the philosophy of religion, which have stressed the belief in the conservation of values as the essential characteristic of religion. All this seemed to me well worth doing, and in a manner as free from the subtler technicalities of scholarship as possible. I have, I hope, stated the whole argument in a direct and fresh way, and have given the problem of religion a somewhat novel, and, I trust, a natural and true perspective. That a phenomenon of such enormous social and historical significance as religion has been would be capable of some sort of justification I have all the while been confident. How far I have succeeded in keeping my mind free from the disturbing influence of scientific pride, on the one hand, and of religious prejudice, on

## P R E F A C E

---

the other, and have assessed religion at its true status and worth, the reader must judge.

This book is the property of Harvard University, and I wish here to express my thanks to President Lowell, and to Professor Bliss Perry, chairman of the committee on the administration of the Bowdoin Prize, for permission to print it in the present form. My best thanks are also due to my former student, Miss Helen Ingham, for reading the proof of the book, and to my wife, Grace Gridley Wilm, for the same service, and for removing a number of foreign idioms which would otherwise have marred my pages.

E. C. WILM.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,  
June 15, 1912.



# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I INTRODUCTORY: THE PRESENT RELIGIOUS SITUATION . . . . .	1-21

The time one of religious unrest, p. 3. Causes for this, p. 5. Excessive specialization of science, p. 5. Mechanistic philosophy, p. 9. Change of attitude towards biblical tradition, p. 12. Waning of church influence, p. 14. And of the influence of the home, p. 16. Is religion obsolete? p. 17.

II THE NATURE OF RELIGION AND ITS RELATION TO PHILOSOPHY . . . . .	23-53
--	-------

What is religion? p. 25. The psychology and the philosophy of religion, p. 33. The sources of religious truth, p. 35. The theory of intuition, p. 36. And of revelation, p. 42. Problems of the philosophy of religion, p. 48. Is reality matter or spirit? p. 49. Is the course of the universe mechanical or telic? p. 49. The problem of evil, p. 50. Religion and morality, p. 51.

III MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM . . . . .	55-76
--	-------

Mind as matter, p. 57. Mind as the effect of matter, p. 59. Criticism of materialism, p. 61. The nature of matter; primary and secondary properties, p. 62. The relational features of experience, p. 66. Further remarks, p. 68. Extra-experiential objects, p. 71. Finite experience and the absolute experience; the world the object of God's thought, p. 72. Is God merely contemplative? p. 75.

IV THE SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF NATURE: MECHANISM AND TELEOLOGY . . . . .	77-109
---	--------

Inadequacy of the preceding discussion: the purposive aspects of experience, p. 79. The world as will, p. 83. Popular meanings of causation, p. 84. The problem of causal efficiency, p. 86. Source of the idea of power, p. 87. Inadequacy of mechanical explanation; explanation by end or purpose, p. 91. Law and purpose not incompatible but complementary conceptions, p. 95. Some results of the unwarranted opposition of law and purpose, p. 97. And of nature and God, p. 98. Evolution both a causal and a purposive process, p. 99. The will to struggle, p. 102. Summary, p. 104.

# CONTENTS

---

CHAPTER	PAGE
V THE VALUE OF LIFE: OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM . . .	111-156
<p>The central problem of religion: Is life good on the whole? p. 113. The terms of the problem; definition of good, p. 115. Has life ethical worth? Difficulties of the question, p. 119. The contribution of biology; pleasure feeling and welfare, p. 124. The effects of heredity and of sexual selection, p. 127. Social heredity, p. 132. The causes of misery largely remediable, p. 134. Activity and happiness, p. 136. The contribution of insight, p. 141. And of love, p. 146. Is there moral progress? p. 148.</p>	
VI THE SHADOW OF DEATH . . . . .	157-184
<p>If life is good, death must be an evil, p. 159. The mere assurance of a future life is unimportant, p. 160. The arguments against immortality are not conclusive, p. 161. But neither can we prove immortality, p. 166. The argument from desire, p. 167. From the injustice of life, p. 168. Ignorance concerning the future not an evil, p. 171. If immortality is not true, life does not lose its value, p. 172. And the effects of life are not lost, p. 174. But premature death is sad, p. 177. The conditions of the possible survival of mind, p. 179. And of the individual mind, p. 181.</p>	
VII RELIGION AND MORALITY . . . . .	185-214
<p>The nature of the issue, p. 187. Religion implies ethical attitudes, p. 193. The historical connection between religion and morality, p. 193. The motives of action: "sanctions" of morality, p. 195. Religion a primarily conservative influence, p. 198. Reasons for this, p. 201. Religion renders action more vigorous through the release of unused energies, p. 204. Hence its heroisms, p. 207. And its art, p. 209. Mystery and moral power, p. 210. The stimulus of prestige, p. 211. The suggestive force of personality, p. 212.</p>	
VIII THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE . . . . .	215-232
<p>Summary of the foregoing, p. 217. The religion of the future will be theistic, p. 223. And humanistic, p. 226. It will be progressive, p. 227. It will express itself through institutions, p. 228. It will be ethical, p. 229. The romance of religion, p. 229.</p>	
INDICES . . . . .	235



I

INTRODUCTORY: THE PRESENT  
RELIGIOUS SITUATION



# THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

## I

### INTRODUCTORY: THE PRESENT RELIGIOUS SITUATION

The time  
one of  
religious  
unrest.

It is a matter of frequent remark that modern life is becoming secularized, or, put somewhat more brusquely, that the religious view of the world is becoming obsolete, and the religious consciousness correspondingly enfeebled. It is easy to exaggerate this. The opinion that religion would be lost is one which recurs with surprising frequency in history. But religion survives, and is today one of the potent and vital forces in civilization. As Sabatier eloquently says: "The cults it has espoused and abandoned have deceived it in vain; in vain has the criticism of savants and philosophers shattered its dogmas and mythologies; in vain has religion left trails of blood and fire throughout the annals of humanity; it has survived all change, all revolution, all stages of culture and progress. Cut down

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

a thousand times, the ancient stem has always sent new branches forth.”<sup>1</sup> The fact is that the religious instinct manifests itself in many forms, and the religious life embodies itself in many guises. And to one who has been accustomed to center his attention upon the temporary forms in which religion is cast, and through which it must necessarily express itself, any modification of these temporary and outward forms will seem to be a serious modification of religion itself. For many persons any reorganization or readjustment of theological doctrines, for example, means an abandonment of religion. But to those who look upon theological progress as a necessary phase of general scientific and social progress, such theological reconstruction will not be understood to mean an abandonment of the religious point of view, or of the fundamental principles upon which the religious life rests. On the contrary, the sensitiveness which religion shows to changes which go on in cognate departments, and its power to adjust itself to the constantly enlarging world of scientific standards and ideas, may signify an

<sup>1</sup> Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion, pp. 3-4.

## INTRODUCTORY

---

inherent vitality and strength which are entirely reassuring.

**Causes  
for this.** Nevertheless, when all is said, there probably remains some truth in the belief that religion has suffered some depression in modern life. The causes of this are so varied, and often operate so silently that they are extremely difficult to isolate and describe. There are, however, five broad tendencies distinguishable whose existence is undeniable, and whose bearing upon religious life is fairly obvious. Three of these are scientific in character, and affect more directly the educated classes; two are more general, and affect profoundly the great body of our population, especially in towns and cities. I shall enumerate them in the order mentioned.

**Excessive  
specializa-  
tion of  
science.** Among the more strictly academic influences tending to disorganize and disturb religious life, one is doubtless the excessive specialization which has been such a striking feature of modern science. The scientific, literary and historical labors of the last half-century have been immeasurably fruitful, presenting us with a body of

facts and generalizations intricate almost beyond conception, and altogether imposing in its proportions. Time was when a scholar of the power of an Aristotle or a Leibniz could compass the entire range of human knowledge. But no one today, no matter what may be his native endowment or his industry, can hope to do more than acquaint himself with the method of scientific study, to command in detail a very limited field of investigation, and perhaps, if time and strength permit, to familiarize himself superficially with the general results of the various lines of study other than his own, in order to answer for himself, if he cares to, some of the more fundamental questions affecting life and practice. Year by year, however, the task of interpretation becomes more difficult, and the intellectual problem of bringing under a single world-view, which shall have some degree of adequacy and systematic completeness, the vast materials of science is even today an almost hopeless one.

The result of this astounding development after centuries of comparative intellectual quiescence has been what might well have

## INTRODUCTORY

---

been anticipated. The experience of exhilaration which followed in the wake of the great lines of scientific advance has been succeeded by one of perplexity and baffled impotence in the face of certain problems of ethical and religious import, particularly, for which traditional solutions are no longer available. Many of the old landmarks of belief have been completely swept away, and others are about to yield under the pressure and grind of the unceasing flood of scientific and historical criticism beating against them. Many views formerly believed to involve grave moral and practical issues have all but disappeared from among us. Some of these have been abandoned only after a prolonged and bitter struggle; others have slipped out of our thought unawares, owing either to a process of gradual corrosion, or else to the rise of other and more engrossing interests. It is quite natural also, where so much is found untenable, that a tendency should grow up to suspect everything which bears upon it the marks of age and tradition. The tendency to wholesale abandonment has, in the absence of clear standards of truth and value, extended

to, and throughly involved, not only theoretical beliefs, but, what is more serious, customs, moral standards, ideals and institutions as well. As the social philosophers of a former time concluded that, since society and the state were not divine institutions, but a mere artifice of human invention,—the results of compacts made by men for their mutual benefit,—these institutions could again be dissolved by men when the benefits contemplated no longer accrued, so many in our day seem to have lapsed into the crude individualism of the eighteenth century, and have declared that, since the moral code, or the sacred writings, or the church, or the family are not divine institutions, in an old and outworn sense of the term, they are therefore of no further significance or value. In spite of the great progress of political and social philosophy, and our theoretical insight into the fact that each of us, though a unit, is still an organic part of a larger whole, and can deserve and enjoy liberty only under law, we are still widely disposed to emphasize our rights and to forget our duties, and, in general, to underestimate the significance of



## INTRODUCTORY

---

the institutional life in virtue of which we have become what we are. The sabbath, with some, interferes with the right to work, with others, with the right to play. The legal regulation of the liquor traffic interferes with the right—well, to starve one's family, or it even checks the free development of social and aesthetic sentiments.<sup>1</sup> Marriage cuts across the lines of natural affinity, and is incompatible with a many-sided development; and law and order in general are felt to be inconvenient restrictions of our natural rights and opportunities from which we are often justified in freeing ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

Mechanistic philosophy. Side by side with this negative result of the expansion of modern knowledge there appeared another phenomenon which, though constructive in outward appearance and intention, also exercised a negative and depressing effect upon the religious consciousness. The philosophical instinct

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Münsterberg, *Psychology and Temperance, American Traits*, IV.

<sup>2</sup> For a further discussion of this point, and for a discussion of the duty of education in teaching the social solidarity of the race, and its indebtedness to the past, see Butler, *The Meaning of Education*, Essay II; Adler, *The Ethical Efficiency of Education*, in Sadler, *Moral Instruction and Training in Schools*, p. 97 ff.

is strong, and it asserted itself in an heroic attempt to bring into some kind of organic unity the unwieldy materials accumulated by the extraordinary activities of science. The result was the somewhat impromptu organization of a system of philosophy out of what purported to be the established results of modern, especially physical, investigations, and by the aid of categories whose employment in the special sciences had yielded such wealthy results. There arose, therefore, through the substitution of mechanical or quasi-mechanical categories, such as natural law, uniform causation, matter and energy, the survival of the fittest through struggle, and the like, for the earlier teleological categories, such as special creation, purposive adaptation, etc., a system of mechanistic and materialistic philosophy whose leading features are today so familiar in scientific and even in popular circles. Under this mechanistic and physical view of the world, matter, not spirit, is the sole reality, and man, and the various spiritual interests associated with his life, appear rather as an incident, important indeed for man, but entirely unimportant

otherwise, in the process of universal evolution. Religion can of course not prosper in an iron-shod universe of blind law, a universe indifferent to ethical distinctions and to the ideals of man. Man and his life, on this view, can at best claim but an episodic and ephemeral existence in a world of mass, motion and unbending law. The ideals and aspirations which form so important a part of moral and religious life become in such a world meaningless and futile.

I do not myself share this view of the place of life and mind in the universe, and there is abundant evidence, I believe, that the naturalistic type of philosophy is fast being rendered obsolete by the progress of thought, and by the process of self-criticism on the part of the very sciences, physics and biology, which are mainly responsible for the naturalistic view, and the resulting physical and secular view of life. In so far, therefore, as the present religious unrest is due to the presuppositions and theories of materialism and mechanism, the religious situation may fairly be expected to improve with the dissolution of the world-view upon which it depends, and the re-estab-

lishment of a philosophy more in harmony with the best modern knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Change of  
attitude  
towards  
biblical  
tradition.

I think we shall not go far wrong if we mention as the third great cause of the decadence of religious life, in so far as such decadence exists, the collapse of authoritative theology which has been such a characteristic feature of the higher intellectual life in Europe and America during the last half-century. Owing partly to the somewhat hasty interpretations of the results of scientific investigations to which allusion has just been made, and partly to the very energetic and fruitful literary, historical and philological studies, the belief in any form of revealed religion has in many quarters been greatly enfeebled, and often entirely destroyed. With the weakening of the revealed basis of religious beliefs, many theological traditions not directly depending upon biblical sources have likewise largely lost their power of ap-

<sup>1</sup>That idealism in some form bids fair to dominate philosophy for some time to come seems probable from the very large and valuable literature written within the last decade or two by writers of first-rate scientific equipment and of genuine creative power, such as James Ward, Royce, James, Bergson, Edward Caird, John Caird, McTaggart, A. E. Taylor, Paulsen, Eucken, and a host of others.

## INTRODUCTORY

---

peal, and have, along with the biblical doctrines with which they were associated, been discarded as either obsolescent or entirely discredited. Now it is my conviction (a conviction which I shall seek later to justify) that religion cannot exist without a nucleus of theological belief, consciously or unconsciously held. When therefore one of the leading sources of such belief is questioned or even discredited, it is inevitable that the religious life which has grown up around this belief, and clings to it as a vine to its support, should be more or less disturbed. Professor McTaggart has stated the case admirably: "The only roads by which religious dogma has been reached in the past are revelation and metaphysics, and every year fewer people appear willing to accept any system of asserted revelation as valid without support from metaphysics. Now every one who studies metaphysics does not arrive at conclusions on which religion can be based. And, even if he did, the study of metaphysics is only open to those who have a certain natural or acquired fitness for it. The number of people who will be left between the rapidly diminish-

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

ing help of revelation and the possibly increasing help of metaphysics seems likely to be unpleasantly large.”<sup>1</sup>

Another cause of religious depression is doubtless the increasing complexity of modern life, and the consequent restriction of church influence due thereto. A generation ago the church was the center of the educational, social and religious life of the community. Today many of the functions formerly discharged by the church have been taken over by the state and by private enterprises.<sup>2</sup> Among the more important of these are education and social relief. The state is everywhere assuming an increasingly large share in educational responsibility; systematic charity and philanthropy, formerly, like education, the exclusive care of the church, have also gained wide legislative and public support. So thoroughly has the popular conscience been awakened to its ethical responsibility that the state, through the agency of its schools, is even undertaking the moral and religious training of the young, thus assuming

Waning of  
church in-  
fluence.

<sup>1</sup> J. E. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sisson, *The State Absorbing the Function of the Church*, *International Journal of Ethics*, April 1907, pp. 336 ff.

## INTRODUCTORY

---

at least a part of the responsibility for what would seem to be one of the most distinctive functions of the religious organization.<sup>1</sup>

The result is, whether we like it or not, that the church, as an institution, occupies, and seems destined to occupy, a relatively less strategic and conspicuous position in the community life than it formerly did. The pulpit, at one time the leading intellectual and spiritual force in the community, is obliged to compete today with the lecture platform, the school and the public press; and the opportunity for social intercourse which the church, especially in villages and rural communities, at one time almost exclusively afforded is today offered by a bewildering variety of competing agencies. The minister no longer speaks with the authority which his profession and the prestige of the church formerly conferred upon him. He has to take his place in the ranks of other influential men in the community, and he possesses only such authority as his words and his personality naturally

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of the relation of public education to moral and religious training see Coe, *Education in Religion and Morals*; Sadler, *op. cit.*, and my book, *The Culture of Religion*.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

carry with them. Small wonder, then, that the interests for which the church specifically stands should have suffered some decline, and that the life of the people should have become pretty thoroughly secularized. This is only to be expected, especially when, as is at present the case, no clear division of labor between the church and the state has been effected, and no systematic measures are anywhere taken for the conservation of our spiritual interests.<sup>1</sup>

And of the influence of the home. Closely connected with the loss of control of the moral and religious situation on the part of the church is the similar failure on the part of an institution of at least equal importance for the maintenance of spiritual culture, the home. Nothing is more striking, even to the casual observer, than the publicity of our modern life, and the unsheltered and homeless condition of great portions of our population. It is an important fact, which, one fears, much reiteration has rendered too threadbare for vital

<sup>1</sup> I seem to imply here that moral and religious training in educational institutions and the church, which are the main social instruments for the conservation of higher forms of culture, are comparatively inefficient. That they are so is, I think, indisputable. I have stated the case somewhat fully in the *Educational Review* for March 1912, and in *The Culture of Religion*.



## INTRODUCTORY

---

apprehension, that the higher life of a people, its ethical and religious culture, depends largely upon the home, and the powerful influences which flow, or should flow, from it. The integrity of the modern home, however, is seriously threatened by a number of influences, the two most alarming of which, I should say, are the ease and frequency of divorce, and, what is perhaps even more disastrous, the haste and nervous intensity of our life, with its tyrannical demands, which take parents and children alike out of the home and into the engrossing activities of business and social life. Family worship, with its simple but uplifting associations, is rapidly becoming a memory. The companionship of parents, with its fortifying confidences and intimacies, and of children with each other, is being replaced by the chance companionship, often superficial and even dangerous, of the street, the shop and the social gathering.

Is religion  
obsolete?

This, in its most salient features, is the somewhat critical situation in which religion finds itself. For those, of course, who regard religion as a neutral or a negative influence in the life of man, or even,

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

in the phrase of Burke, "superstitious folly, enthusiastical nonsense and holy tyranny," and as an obstacle to progress, the present religious situation may be viewed with complacency, or may even be regarded as a hopeful symptom, indicating, as it does, the approaching dissolution of an obsolete feature of our civilization, and the ushering in of a newer and a more adequate world-view. I do not myself share this attitude, but I believe, on the contrary, that the abandonment, or even the partial obsolescence, of the religious point of view and of the religious life would mean an irreparable loss to culture, a loss so serious as to be viewed as almost a social calamity. No candid student of history will deny that, in spite of many a miscarriage of good intention, in spite, even, of innumerable evils and crimes perpetrated in the name of religion (too much entirely, I think, has been said of these) the part which religion, and particularly the Christian religion, has played in the progress of humanity has been an altogether notable one. And religion, as I shall maintain, is today one of the most genuine and permanent aspects of our life, and an ethical force of truly

## INTRODUCTORY

---

commanding importance. And I do not maintain this view on sentimental grounds merely, nor on the basis of a popular and traditional estimate of its worth and meaning, but on philosophical and reflective grounds as well.

I shall seek to render these grounds more explicit in the following sections. Is religion, like the vestigial processes of an organism, or like the buttons on the back of a man's coat, something useless, a structure which has outlived its function, is religion a remnant merely of a pre-scientific world-view, or has it today a rightful place and meaning in the life process as a whole?

I am well aware that to many this question will seem a gratuitous one, and that any one who raises it exposes himself to various sorts of criticism. There will be those, on the one hand, who will regard an answer favorable to religion as self-evident, and the question whether religion is capable of justification as somewhat indelicate, indicating a lack of veneration. To any one, however, who is even superficially acquainted with the great thought-movements of modern Europe and America, it will not be news that there exists

another class of persons (it is not so large as it is independent and aggressive) who will regard the raising of the question as gratuitous for the very opposite reason, the reason, namely, that any attempt to justify religion nowadays must necessarily prove antiquated and futile. It is my strong feeling, at any rate, that no discussion of religion will prove entirely adequate in the present state of religious opinion which does not begin with a frank and free investigation of the very place and validity of the religious consciousness itself. The following sections will accordingly be devoted to an attempt, on a modest scale, to be sure, but I hope none the less fundamental, to justify religion in the eyes especially of those who have been affected by the scientific influences referred to at the beginning of the present section, and by the philosophical inferences drawn from them. Such a justification will take two main forms, on account of the twofold aspect of religion, which I shall seek to render more explicit at a later point. Religion claims, in the first place, to be an expression, more or less adequate, of the fundamental nature of things. It contains a

## INTRODUCTORY

---

view of the universe which purports to be essentially true. This we may call its theoretical or philosophical aspect. In addition to this, however, religion sustains a normative or practical relation to man's life. This we may call its remedial or redemptive function. It is, accordingly, only after a satisfactory disposition of the intellectual and ethical problems raised by religion has been made that we can reasonably countenance any form of activity or life purporting to be distinctively religious.

### LITERATURE

Boutroux, *Science and Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, Part I.

Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe*.

Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*, Book I, Chapter V.

Sisson, *The State Taking Over the Function of the Church*, *Int. Jo. Ethics*, April 1907.

Reports R. E. A., II, pp. 46 ff.



II

THE NATURE OF RELIGION AND  
ITS RELATION TO PHILOSOPHY





## II

# THE NATURE OF RELIGION AND ITS RELATION TO PHILOSOPHY

## I

What is  
religion?      What, then, is religion, and what  
justification can be given, under the  
conditions of modern knowledge, for its exist-  
ence as a phase or feature of our modern life?

“Religion,” as a recent writer has strikingly said, “is clearly a state of mind.”<sup>1</sup> Now a common error in the analysis and description of this state of mind is that of excessive reduction or simplification. Thus religion has frequently been identified with a system of intellectual beliefs or propositions concerning certain objects, such as the beliefs that God exists, that he controls events to serve his ends, that he rewards the just, and the like. Or, second, the differentiating feature of religion is said to be its emotional character. It is held to be an emotion, or a group of emotions such as fear, reverence, love, etc., prompted by some supernatural personage or

<sup>1</sup> J. E. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 3.

object. Or, finally, there are those who associate religion exclusively with morality or conduct. The latter view is naturally a very common one in an age like the present, with its strong emphasis upon everything practical and its distrust of the merely academic or intellectual.<sup>1</sup> Then one comes upon partial combinations of these views, as in the celebrated definition of religion proposed by Matthew Arnold as "morality touched with emotion."

Now it will not be difficult to show that all these views of the nature of religion are alike inadequate to the richness and complexity of the religious consciousness. Let us first take the very prevalent view of religion as morality. A moment's reflection will show that religion must be something wider than morality, for there are many persons whom we should unquestionably regard as moral, in the sense of high-minded in their motives and their conduct, but whom we should hardly wish to call

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that many so-called religious movements of the day are in reality social and philanthropic in their nature, the strictly religious elements in them being entirely lacking or negligible. The Brotherhood movement, the Young Men's Christian Association, and other kindred organizations, are primarily ethical or social in the motive and character of their activities.

religious. Hume and John Stuart Mill were well-known Englishmen of this type.

Nor would it be entirely satisfactory to call persons religious merely because they possessed certain emotions, no matter how exalted these emotions might be. For while emotions may become very serviceable as motivating forces, prompting to useful conduct, it is also true that they may prove very volatile, and that they often spend themselves without leaving any very solid result behind, in the shape of a more idealized mode of life. But a religion which remains merely a spiritual mood could perhaps not be called religion in any complete sense of that term.

The definition of religion as morality touched with emotion has, owing to the conciseness with which it is stated, and its superficial plausibility, been widely circulated. Still, this characterization of religion does not serve us much better than the previous ones. For there are doubtless many "merely moral" persons whose moral activity is accompanied by strong emotional fervor. In fact, a person who does not possess some emotional enthusiasm for some moral cause or other is an excep-

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

tion so rare as to be rightly regarded as a moral monstrosity. As Professor Mackenzie well says, conduct becomes emotional whenever it is directed to some end which we have come to regard as supremely important. But conduct believed to be very important, and hence accompanied by strong emotion, is not necessarily more religious than that of the good workman who carefully finishes his job without feeling that anything particular is at stake. "The truth is that the emotional quality of our actions depends largely on the question whether they are habitual acts, acts which belong to the ordinary universe within which we live, or whether we are rising into an unfamiliar universe. Now it may readily be granted that religion, in any real sense of the word, can hardly be made so habitual as not to involve some uplifting of the soul, some withdrawal from the point of view of the ordinary life to a more comprehensive or more profound apprehension of the world and of our relation to it. Hence it can hardly fail to involve emotion. Even the *Amor intellectualis Dei* of Spinoza, however purely intellectual it may be, is still *amor*. But

## THE NATURE OF RELIGION

---

conduct may involve strong and deep emotion and yet not be specially religious.”<sup>1</sup>

The identification of religion with theology, finally, must prove equally unsatisfactory. A man may subscribe to all the creeds in Christendom and still be, by common consent, a non-religious, or even an unreligious person. All this is so obvious, I take it, as to require no further discussion.

Let us say, therefore, that religion cannot successfully be defined in terms of any phase or activity of our inner life exclusively. It is not conduct nor morality, though it doubtless includes conduct or morality; it is not a system of beliefs, though, as I have already intimated elsewhere, it includes beliefs; it is not an emotion, though it, like literature, will, if it is vital, manifest enthusiasm and emotional glow. Religion is not a belief, nor an emotion, nor an attitude of will exclusively: it is all of these at once. It is man's total attitude and outlook. I should define it as *an emotion based upon a conviction that events*

<sup>1</sup> A Manual of Ethics, pp. 434-435. For a further discussion of Matthew Arnold's view see Professor Muirhead's Elements of Ethics, p. 180.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

*are being overruled in view of a supreme and lasting good, and an attitude of coöperation with the Power in the universe making for this good.*<sup>1</sup>

That emotions such as awe, reverence and love, which characterize the higher religions, should accompany such a belief as is here described is entirely natural in view of the fragile and transient character of man's life and of his life interests when compared with the magnificent but apparently indifferent universe in which his life is set. As Professor Perry has eloquently said: "There is nothing that he can build, nor any precaution that he can take, that weighs appreciably in the balance against the powers which decree good and ill fortune, catastrophe and triumph, life and death."<sup>2</sup>

The above analysis of the religious consciousness has entirely failed of its purpose if it has suggested that the emotional, cognitive

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the definition of religion given by Mr. McTaggart, *op. cit.*, p. 3 ff. For similar views see Jastrow, *The Study of Religion*; Perry, *Approach to Philosophy*; Galloway, *Principles of Religious Development*. Religion, it is seen, is here defined simply as optimism. But since optimism connects itself essentially, to my mind, with a personalistic or theistic interpretation of the universe we might define religion briefly as theistic optimism.

<sup>2</sup> R. B. Perry, *The Moral Economy*, p. 215.

and active features which it contains exist as insulated or sundered elements of our inner life, as an older departmental or faculty psychology too often suggested. That is indeed the fundamental weakness from which the various partial definitions of religion criticized above suffered. Bain, Professor James, and other modern psychologists have thoroughly domesticated the view of the dynamic quality of all mental states, the tendency of mental states to express themselves, to pass over into actions. A thought, as one often hears, is a nascent act. In feeling, too, as Galloway says, a potential conation is always involved, and conation, in its turn, reports itself to consciousness in terms of feeling.<sup>1</sup> The complete fusion of cognitive, feeling and active states is well illustrated by the experience of interest, where the cognitive, affective and impulsive aspects are fused into a unitary whole of mental content. The mind, in fact, is not an aggregate of departments or faculties, but a unity. This view is indeed almost forced upon us when we remember the fluid, streaming character of con-

<sup>1</sup> Galloway, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

sciousness, upon which recent psychology has so much insisted. Mental processes do not exist as clearly demarcated entities whose fundamental character remains stable through successive intervals of time; they are highly mobile and unstable, shifting and changing constantly, re-enforcing, crossing, interfering and combining with each other in endless ways, each detailed process being eventually lost within the unity of the whole, much as a drop of water surrenders its individual identity in the depths of the forward-flowing stream.

The ideas, emotions and attitudes called religious not only merge into and qualify each other; they are, in the well-constituted mind, at least, combined with, and qualified by, the more strictly secular elements of our cognitive and practical life. So scientific ideas, for example, gained in the growth of knowledge, exert an inevitable reconstructive influence over popular and traditional theological notions; the fortunes of life, resulting in a given emotional disposition, will affect the tone of the more specifically religious emotions, etc.

An important application of a pedagogical sort may profitably be made at this point.



## THE NATURE OF RELIGION

---

Religion not only should be, but to a large extent must be, the normal outgrowth of the various experiences, scientific or otherwise, of life as a whole. A religious view of the world, for example, if it is to be more than an external accretion, to be sloughed off at the first rude shock received at the hands of science or philosophical reflection, must be in some genuine sense the result, not of dogmatic teaching or authoritative prescription, but of the ideas and experiences gained from the observation of nature and of men, from the study of literature and of science, and the intelligent assimilation of these inevitable materials of our spiritual culture.

The psychology and the philosophy of religion. Our discussion has not carried us far. For it must be obvious, on a moment's reflection, that a study of religion, if it is to be at all fundamental, cannot rest with a mere psychological description of it, such as was roughly outlined above. We come upon the important distinction at this point between the psychology of religion, in a strict sense of that term, and the philosophy of religion. An item of psychical experience, namely, cannot be merely matter for the

descriptive efforts of the scientist, like a botanical specimen, for example, or a mineral. An idea, like a leaf, does indeed have a certain structure. And this structure, like the structure of the leaf, can be described. Unlike the leaf, however, and unlike any other non-mental phenomenon, the idea or the experience points beyond itself: it claims cognitive validity, claims to be true. In addition to being described, therefore, it can be tested for its truth. So with an attitude of will. It too can be treated analytically and descriptively, in complete abstraction from its moral or social value. But here again the will attitude of a man, unlike any physical phenomenon, can be subjected to an ethical test. The question raised concerning it is not now, What is it? but, What is its ethical or social value? What is its status when it is viewed from the standpoint of an ethical norm or ideal? Now the religious experience, like any other mental content, can be subjected to a similar two-fold treatment. It is in the first place a phenomenon, an empirical fact. It has certain morphological features which can be outlined and described. But religious experi-

## THE NATURE OF RELIGION

---

ence does not merely bulge. It claims truth and ethical worth. And in so doing it subjects itself to an intellectual and ethical test.

It must be evident that, however interesting the psychological analysis of religion may be, and however important as materials for the philosophy of religion the varieties of religious experience may be, it is after all the question of the validity of the religious consciousness in which men are mainly interested. As Principal Forsyth has somewhere cleverly put it, the question we wish most to have answered is not, *What do I feel?* but, *What do I feel?* We must somehow escape from the charmed circle of our subjectivity, and essay the more difficult task of assessing religion's truth and worth. What essential elements of truth does it contain which challenge our intellectual and ethical loyalty?

The sources of religious truth. How can questions of this kind be answered? Only, I reply, by the methods known to science and philosophy, the sober and laborious methods of investigation and intellectual reflection. Theology, if it is to maintain the honored place among the other sciences which it has often

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

occupied in the past, must become scientific in procedure: theology must become philosophy of religion.

The method of dealing with the religious problem suggested here is not one, as everybody knows, which has always been accepted as valid for the solution of the problem in question. We shall do well, therefore, to examine at this point some of the principal methods which have in the past been relied upon to deal with theological questions.

### II

The theory  
of intuition.

Two theories which have played an enormously large part in the thinking both of theologically inclined laymen and of professed theologians are the theories of intuition and of revelation. The first would seem to hold that theological truths, in common perhaps with certain other kinds of truth, are arrived at, not by the method of observation and reflection employed by other scientific disciplines, but by a process of intuition or immediate insight, similar to the immediate, i. e., unreasoned, insight into the truth of a mathematical axiom or the

existence of the external world. Such alleged truths are often referred to as "primary truths," "innate ideas," "fundamental intuitions," and the like. This theory, it is worthy of notice, is not necessarily a theological theory of the origin of knowledge, i. e., it does not necessarily assert that the truth arising from such intuitive insight is God-given. This source of truth might be open even if God did not exist at all. God's existence might, of course, be revealed by an intuition, and such a method of disclosure of this truth has often been asserted.

There is an important element of truth in the intuition theory, which, while not uppermost in the minds of intuitional writers, may well be emphasized at this point. If it is meant that truth is something which can be validated only by bringing it to the test of human experience, that there is no higher court of appeal than thought itself, then the theory expresses a truth which is absolutely fundamental to any philosophy of religion which can hope to gain any wide acceptance from thinking men today. The intuitionist theory, however, means more than this. It

means to remove certain propositions from the rest of the mind's acquirements, so that they shall be exempt from correction and criticism by the body of human experience as a whole. This is a serious step which would involve us in a number of rather serious difficulties the details of which are perhaps too recondite to deal with in this place. Truth ought to be looked upon as something which grows at every point with observation and reflection, something which is self-validating and self-corrective. The only criterion of the truth of anything, accordingly, is its coherence or consistency with the body of human experience as a whole at any stage of its growth. The only way a truth once established can be further confirmed or overthrown is by fresh additions to the total stock of knowledge or the more complete organization of already existing truths, or both. Such fresh additions and internal reorganization may add an unexpected force to a hitherto neglected principle, or may result in the expulsion of other ideas as erroneous and obsolete. The revolution in the prevailing system of astronomy by the discoveries and theories of Copernicus, and

the radical revision of large bodies of popular and scientific knowledge through the influence of Darwinian discoveries and hypotheses are perhaps the most notable examples in the history of science of the process referred to.

A common criterion by which intuitive ideas were supposed to be recognized as such was the vivacity or intensity which they showed, the compulsive force with which they presented themselves to the intellect. It is interesting to notice, however, that the most insistent and vivid experiences which we have, namely sensory and perceptual experiences, are not exempt from the corroborative validation of the kind I have mentioned. A given sense impression is often corrected by another, as when we correct the vast feeling of the hollow in a tooth as reported by the tongue by a subsequent visual impression, or when we deny the validity of a person's perception, and call it an illusion, if it does not correspond to the perceptions received by others of the same object. The colors seen by a color-blind person are certainly genuine and compulsive experiences for the person concerned. That does not keep us, however, from calling

his experiences erroneous, and his perceptive powers defective. The force with which an idea appeals to an individual's mind depends, in any case, upon other conditions than its intrinsic truth or reasonableness, such as its emotional quality, its connections with the individual's interests, the length of time it has been entertained, the social support it receives, etc. The history of thought, at all events, shows innumerable examples of opinions to which men have held with the utmost tenacity of conviction, but which subsequent knowledge nevertheless proved to be false.

Perhaps the most troublesome difficulty in all intuitional theories arises out of the consideration that truths which are intuitive ought to be universally held, for there would seem to be no reason why one person should have access to these truths and not another. A very ready answer to anyone who claims a given proposition as intuitive would be for another to deny that he has an intuitive knowledge of the proposition in question, but that, on the contrary, he regards it as highly doubtful. And it is a fact that there are no ideas which have gained the universal assent of



mankind unless they are truths, like the existence of God, which are attenuated to such a point as to be emptied of all content and significance. Even the idea of God's existence, abstract and devitalized as it is, does not enjoy universal assent. For there are atheists who profess not to have the idea.

Modern psychology, with its strong emphasis on the part played by social imitation in the adoption of given ideas or propositions, is in any case prepared to explain the very general prevalence which certain ideas seem to enjoy. The vast majority of opinions and ideas held by the average man are of course not the product of his individual insight or reflection. A given idea may be the result of the original reflection of some individual, or it may be the result, accumulated through considerable periods of time, of the reflections of a large number of individuals. After being thus formed, it is handed along from one to another until it becomes the common stock in trade of a large number of individuals, and even of whole social groups.

A somewhat related point is that many ideas which appear to have been reached without

any previous process of reasoning were as a matter of fact reached by steps too rapid to have been clearly noticed, or by inferences and reflections carried on too long ago to be distinctly remembered. So the mathematician operates with many conceptions and formulas which he at one time demonstrated to himself, but which he now takes for granted, and in every-day life we often find ourselves confidently holding to a certain decision, without being able, at the time, to remember just how we arrived at it.

And of  
revela-  
tion.

The view that religious truths are the result of a primitive revelation made to certain exceptional or favored individuals is a theological theory which shows certain interesting resemblances to the philosophical theory of the intuitive origin of knowledge just discussed. Here too the ideas supposed to be revealed purport to be final and irreversible expressions of truth, so that the only task left for theology is to expound, systematize and enforce them. This curious theory offers a brilliant illustration of the elaborate workings of the instinct of social imitation referred to above, in virtue of which

a notion, although intrinsically unintelligible, is given a currency and is held with a tenacity directly proportionate to the amount of social sanction which it receives, and the length of time it has successfully prevailed. The notion of a primitive revelation of a final and completed truth is so fragile as to crumble under the slightest touch of psychology. It appears to rest, in the first place, upon the assumption of an idyllic state of society in the far-away past in which man's intellectual powers were more perfect, and his heart less corrupted, than now, a view which our larger knowledge has taught us to put by as a poetic fiction. As President Schurman has well said: "Learning is a process of interpreting the unknown by what is already known. And the knowledge of primitive man, who was engaged in an absorbing struggle for life, whose experiences scarcely got beyond objects of food, shelter, and defence, whose very language denoted only sensible things and events, did not contain the elements necessary for the assimilation of the doctrine of the existence of one infinite spirit, even if one imagined it poured into all the avenues of his intelligence by an

external revealer. . . . The necessity of a human faculty of comprehension cannot be dispensed with even when the eternal Wisdom condescends to instruction. The influence of mind on mind is never mechanical. There is always self-active coöperation. Even

‘A jest’s prosperity lies in the ear  
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue  
Of him that makes it.’ ”

In the second place, even if there were some primal, supernatural source from which the uncorrupted truth originated, it would be a psychological impossibility to communicate the same truth to individuals of different experiences and different grades of mental capacity. Truth cannot, like so much coin, be passed from one individual to another unchanged. No man can receive more than he is prepared to receive. The truth must always, therefore, accommodate itself to the limits and the conditions of human receptivity. It must, before it is received, be compressed, so to speak, to the dimensions of the mind that is to receive it. This is a fundamental pedagogical truth which every

teacher must recognize and observe if he is not to fail of his object.

As is frequently the case with ancient doctrines like the present one, there is an element of truth in it which can be identified if it can be disengaged from the elaborate theological dogmas which encumber it. In the sense that my faculties are not of my own invention, in the sense that truth is not of my own making, but is something objective, something which can be discovered or found,—in that sense all truth is revealed. It is not my own creation, it is the gift of God.

The question of the place and significance of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, a question of deep, though often somewhat unintelligent, interest on the part of a great many people, has already by implication been answered. These writings, composed by men of exceptional religious insight and moral genius, are invaluable as materials for religious and ethical culture. “They contain immortal sentences, they have been bread of life to millions.” Let it however be understood once and for all that their credentials for the thinking man of today can never be the names of the

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

writers who produced them, nor the miraculous events by which they are often said to be authenticated. The only authentication which the Scriptures need, and the only one of which they are capable, is their intrinsic reasonableness and moral power, a reasonableness and power which can be proved only by being brought to the test of present experience. The crucial question is, Do these writings commend themselves to the instructed intelligence and conscience? Are they genuine contributions to the race's wisdom, and do they enter our lives to deepen, ransom and enfranchise them? If so, then their light will not fail: then the floods of criticism will beat against them in vain. On the other hand, if they meet no fundamental human need, if no access of strength accrues from them to the higher life, if our moral nature finds no re-enforcement through them, then no amount of artificial defence, no matter how resourceful and determined, will long save them from eventual elimination along with other institutions and monuments which have failed to prove their fitness to survive. Moreover, like other literary and spiritual achievements of

## THE NATURE OF RELIGION

---

the past, they cannot, at the risk of losing our spiritual strength, be merely assimilated, as if the recapitulation of the past were the object of our spiritual striving. They are rather materials with which our own culture must begin; mere "occasions for new covetings, new triumphs." For a completed human culture is an infinite ideal to which we can approach nearer and nearer with the progress of time, but which we can never reach nor exhaust.

It follows from what has been said that revelation is not confined to so-called sacred books, nor to the past. That spiritual leaders will arise in the future as they have in the past we may confidently expect. Drawing their inspiration from the inexhaustible fountain of nature and their own hearts, as well as from the hoarded riches of humanity's past, they will carry forward the torch of truth, and advance to greater conquests of the spirit than any yet attained. "The doors of the temple stand open day and night before every man, and the oracles of truth never cease." The achievements of the past are varied and precious. But the present and the future, too,

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

have their claim, "their distinct and trembling beauty." No one has been more enamoured of this claim and charm than Emerson, that wonderful spokesman of the individual and of the future. Men talk, says he, as if revelation were closed, as though God were dead. "It is the office of every true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that he speaketh, not spake"; that miracles, prophesy, poetry, the ideal life, the holy life do not exist as ancient history merely, but as an ever-present possibility that lies before every man if he will rid himself of misgivings which paralyze, and believe in his essential greatness and strength.<sup>1</sup>

### III

Problems  
of the  
philoso-  
phy of  
religion.

The only valid source of religious truth, then, is philosophy. It will be well to indicate now the main lines of philosophical discussion which are relevant to the problem of religion. They seem to me to reduce to about four fundamental types, though these types ultimately

<sup>1</sup> Every one should read the whole of Emerson's Divinity School Address, which is perhaps the most eloquent defense of the spiritual independence of the individual in American literature.



## THE NATURE OF RELIGION

---

come down to the single issue of optimism and pessimism, as will be seen.

Is reality matter or spirit?  
The first question of a philosophical sort which has religious implications is the question of the fundamental nature of reality. What is the stuff, so to speak, out of which reality is made, and to which it is ultimately reducible? All the historical answers to this question, omitting minor types and dualistic hypotheses, are either materialistic or idealistic in their nature. Reality can be finally interpreted either in terms of matter or physical energy, or it can be interpreted in terms of spirit. It must be obvious without further discussion that the solution of the first metaphysical problem, whatever it may turn out to be, must have some interest for the philosophy of religion.

Is the course of the universe mechanical or telic?  
But, second, reality is nothing quiescent, as our experience every day sufficiently informs us. It is essentially something dynamic and mobile, "hurled from change to change unceasingly." The problem presented by the restless and unceasing mutability of existence is, indeed, one of the oldest and most persistent in the

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

whole range of philosophy and literature. Is this change mere change, issuing nowhere? Is it capricious, or is it orderly, cumulative, productive of results? And if productive of results, are these results the impartial and fatal products of mechanical processes, operating blindly, or are they, in some sense, the product of intelligent contrivance, of wilful foresight?

The problem of evil. There is one further problem which philosophy must solve, and it is in a sense the most important of all for religion: the problem of optimism and pessimism. Are the forces operating in the universe indifferent to ethical distinctions, or even inimical to ideal interests and values? Or is the movement of the world process a movement forward towards "some great, divine event?" To put it Browning's way, do we find in nature merely a wasteful and unethical display of power, or do we find love in it too? Much has been said of the religious bearings of the theory of evolution, and we shall have something more to say upon that topic in the proper connection. What I wish to emphasize here is that the important religious issue is

## THE NATURE OF RELIGION

---

not the old issue between creation and evolution, but rather the problem of the actual nature of the world, and of the possibility of progress. The critical religious question is evidently not by what method the world and our life have been produced, but rather what the particular method employed has effected. Is the world as we know it one in which we may realize fairly well our legitimate interests and purposes? Are the conditions and prospects of life such that we are enabled to pronounce the world good on the whole? This is the fundamental question upon the answer to which a religious view of the world must ultimately depend.

The relation of religion to morality. The three types of problems so far mentioned are clearly philosophical in character, and they must be solved by the aid of philosophy. But we now come upon another salient test of the validity of religion, the importance of which cannot easily be exaggerated. Religion, we have said, contains certain theoretical elements, certain beliefs as to the nature of the world in which we live. It is a theory of life, offering an illumination of life. But

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

religion contains also certain mandatory or ethical features, which become extremely important in any final evaluation of it. Besides being a theory of life, religion is also a force in life. Its solution of the world problem is not theoretical merely, it is also practical. Religion is not merely speculative, it is remedial as well. It is an ethical imperative, a call to duty, a programme of salvation. Christ came into the world, according to his words, both to enlighten the world and to save the world. If the ethical function of religion is as prominent as here described, religion will necessarily have to submit to an ethical test. Is there anything in the nature of religion which essentially fits it for its moral task?

These are the salient questions to the consideration of which we must now address ourselves.

### LITERATURE

Caird, J., Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion, Chapters I-III.

Galloway, Principles of Religious Development.

Höfding, The Philosophy of Religion, especially Part III.

## THE NATURE OF RELIGION

---

Leuba, The Contents of Religious Consciousness,  
The Monist, Vol. XI, p. 536 ff.

McTaggart, Some Dogmas of Religion, Chapter I.

Rashdall, Philosophy and Religion, Lecture V.

Royce, Sources of Religious Insight, Chapters I-III.

Sabatier, Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion, Chapters  
I-III.

Schurman, Belief in God, Lecture III.



III

MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM





### III

## MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM

Among the metaphysical views which render any religious construction of our experience difficult, or in principle impossible, the best known is perhaps the theory called materialism. The fundamental dogma of materialism is that matter is the sole reality, mind being only a subordinate phase or an effect of matter. It is generally understood that materialism has been superseded in the progress of modern thought, and it is not held by many philosophers of rank today, although it still survives in the form of a working hypothesis in certain branches of science, and as a rather common point of view of large numbers of people who have been touched by the influence of popularized physical and biological science. It will be well, therefore, to outline briefly its salient features, and to examine its basis and implications somewhat carefully.

### I

Materialism appears in the history of philosophy in several distinguish-

Mind as  
matter.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

able forms. Only two of these, however, need detain us here. In its most thoroughgoing form materialism completely identifies matter and mind, asserting that mind is simply a particular mode or manifestation of matter, like light, heat or electricity. This type of materialism is sometimes called equative materialism, because the two entities, mind and matter, usually thought of as radically distinct kinds of reality, are asserted to be identical. One of the best-known exponents of this view is the English philosopher Hobbes, who held mind to be a "refined body, or a movement in certain parts of the body," and who defined psychology outrightly as the doctrine of motion.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to make anything out of this theory. Perhaps the best answer to it is the answer of Paulsen: "The proposition, Thoughts are in reality nothing but movements in the brain, feelings are nothing but bodily processes in the vaso-motor system, is absolutely irrefutable; not because it is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hobbes, *Human Nature*, and Falckenberg, *History of Modern Philosophy*, p. 72 ff. The best history of materialism is Lange, *History of Materialism*. See also the standard histories of philosophy, such as Überweg, Höffding, Erdmann, Windelband or Weber.

## MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM

---

true, however, but because it is meaningless. The absurd has this advantage in common with truth, that it cannot be refuted. To say that thought is at bottom nothing but a movement is about the same as to say that iron is at bottom nothing but wood. No argument avails here. All that can be said is this: I understand by a thought, a thought and not a movement of brain molecules; and similarly, I designate by the words anger and fear, anger and fear themselves and not a contraction or dilation of blood-vessels. Thought is not motion, but thought.”<sup>1</sup>

Mind as  
the effect  
of matter.

A second and somewhat different form of materialism recognizes consciousness as a form of reality distinct from matter, but makes it dependent for its existence and continuance upon the properties and activities of matter. This form has sometimes been called causal materialism, since it asserts that matter is the cause of mind. Materialism of this type is extremely familiar to us through current psychological literature, in which the hypothesis that brain events universally condition mental events

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Philosophy, p. 82.

has been so thoroughly domesticated as to appear to many almost axiomatic. This view has also received a wide circulation through popular science which has accustomed us to think of the mind as occupying a subordinate place in the universe, existing in it as a temporary phenomenon only, and destined to disappear when the physical conditions making it possible are no longer realized. Mind here has a certain grade of reality, but it is not an ultimate form of existence. Ultimate reality exists in the forms of matter and physical energy. These, as the irreducible forms in which reality expresses itself, are indestructible, enduring, in the very nature of the case, as long as the universe itself endures. But the existence of mind is highly precarious. Man, as evolutionary science often tells us, came upon the scene comparatively recently; millions of years, perhaps, after the physical universe had arrived at its present stage of completeness. So also man will eventually disappear, but this scenic universe, in which he has found a temporary home, will continue unaltered in its essence after the last vestiges of life and mind have been destroyed, and

man, once esteemed the last term and the consummate product of creation, "lies dreamless in the dust."

### II

Criticism of  
materialism. Now while the materialistic account of the universe is not lacking in a certain grandeur of outline, I shall maintain that, regarded from a metaphysical point of view, it is strictly untenable, and even unthinkable. To show this we must give close attention to some fundamental considerations, which, while extremely elementary, are so far-reaching in their consequences for our theory of reality as to deserve the most careful consideration.

Materialism is often said to have received its death blow at the hands of Kant, although, as everybody knows, damaging criticism had been passed upon the theory long before the time of the illustrious Königsberg philosopher. The theories of Kant are, however, of very great historical importance, and cannot safely be neglected by anyone who wishes to understand the main historical stages through which modern metaphysics has passed, and by which

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

idealism gained its present ascendancy. We shall, however, do well, in our criticism of the fundamental thesis of materialism, to make a beginning with certain considerations first prominently urged by Berkeley, whom many regard as the first and the greatest of modern idealists.<sup>1</sup>

The nature  
of matter;  
primary and  
secondary  
qualities.

The fundamental dogma of materialism is that nothing really exists but matter, and that thought, feeling, emotion, consciousness of any kind, in fact, is nothing but a phase or an effect of matter. But let us take a piece of matter, some physical object, as we say, and examine it with a view to seeing what it really is.

The analysis of a physical object, such as a piece of lump sugar, will reveal that it is a combination of attributes or properties such as whiteness, hardness, sweetness, and the like. With a little further thought we discover that these so-called qualities of the object are also states of the subject who perceives them, in some way. I feel or experience

<sup>1</sup> The chief writings of Berkeley are the *Treatise on the Principles of Human Knowledge*, and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. See also A. C. Fraser, *Berkeley, and the histories of philosophy*, especially Höfding, Falckenberg and Calkins.

the whiteness, the hardness, the sweetness, etc. These qualities exist as phases or nuances of my experience. Now let us ask ourselves the question, Does the whiteness exist at all when it does not enter into someone's experience? Or, Does the sweetness exist when no one tastes the sweetness? It seems clear that the answer must be negative. The most we can say is that the qualities in question are produced by causes which are entirely different from the qualities themselves. So color might be said to be produced in the mind by undulations of luminiferous ether. If the further question should be asked whether there would be any color in the absence of sensitively organized creatures, like man, whether, in other words, the ethereal vibrations are themselves colored, the answer would unquestionably be negative. Vibrations are no more colors than a slammed door is the same as the feeling of irritation which it produces in the bystander. The slammed door is one thing and the irritation is an entirely different thing. Vibrations are no more colored than a slammed door can be said to be angry. What is true of colors, is

true of sounds, odors, tastes. These so-called qualities of objects have no existence apart from some mind which experiences them. Their existence apart from minds which apprehend them is absolutely unintelligible and unmeaning.

Recognizing the force of this criticism, philosophers long ago made a certain distinction meant to rescue the theory of the independent existence of the physical world, the distinction between the so-called primary and the secondary properties of matter. The secondary qualities, such as colors, sounds, tastes, odors, etc., are admitted not to exist in the things themselves, but only in the minds which perceive them. Furthermore, the properties in things which produce these sensations are admitted to be totally unlike the sensations which they produce. But there exist, it is said, in addition to these secondary or accidental qualities, certain primary or essential qualities which can in no sense be separated from the objects themselves. Were all minds to disappear from the universe, these qualities would still remain. Things might cease to be red or blue, bitter or sweet,



sonorous or fragrant, but they could by no possibility cease to occupy space, be rough or smooth, round or square, solid or fluid. The object, strictly speaking, is just the combination of these primary properties.

It will be sufficient to say here that the distinction between primary and secondary qualities has often been shown to be an untenable one. In the first place, the same argument which is advanced against the objective existence of secondary qualities, namely that they imply sense organs and a nervous and mental organization of a certain type, applies to the primary qualities just as fully as to the secondary. Impenetrability, for example, is unmeaning apart from the tactual and muscular senses through which resistance is felt; geometrical form is imperceptible except through the senses of sight and touch, and so on through the entire list. In the second place, experience never gives us a primary quality by itself, but always in combination with secondary ones. Thus we never get color except as spread out over a surface, and, *vice versa*, we never get extension that is not colored. An object which is nothing but a

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

combination of primary qualities is a fiction to which nothing whatever corresponds in our experience.

If the objection is here made that matter must exist as the cause of our experiences, idealism answers that matter thus becomes an object of mental inference, and is, as such, still an "idea," to use Berkeley's term, an object of consciousness. As Miss Calkins urges, "inferred objects must be known objects, objects present to the mind, and cannot therefore be possessed of independent existence."<sup>1</sup>

The relational features of experience.

Kant<sup>2</sup> arrived at idealism by a somewhat different route, and one of his essential contributions to the discussion is of first-rate interest for our present problem. We defined an object awhile ago as a combination of certain qualities or properties. The object, however, contains something more than a number of qualities

<sup>1</sup> Persistent Problems of Philosophy, p. 130. See also pp. 175 ff., 198 ff., 366 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For Kant's theory of knowledge see Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, or Watson, Selections from Kant. For discussions of Kant, E. Caird, The Critical Philosophy of Kant; W. Wallace, Kant; Paulsen, Kant; Morris, Kant's Critique of Pure Reason; Schurman, articles in the Philosophical Review for 1898 and 1900.

## MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM

---

or properties. It contains, namely, certain relations among the qualities or properties. When we say that the object is of such and such a shape, for example, we mean that the parts of the object stand in such and such spatial relations to each other. Or if we say that lump sugar is not so white as chalk, or that it is not so heavy as a piece of iron of equal size, we have called attention to relations of degree between qualities of the sugar and similar qualities of the other substances mentioned. And if we say that the small particles which make up the lump of sugar are held together by the law of attraction, or that the sight of the sugar makes one's mouth water, we are asserting causal relations among the particles of sugar, or between the sight of the sugar and the secretion of saliva.

Now Kant held that, while the qualities of an object are furnished in some way by the object itself, the relations among these qualities, such as spatial and temporal relations, causal relations, relations of degree, etc., are furnished by the mind. Relations are "the work of the mind." Things and the mind are both essential, therefore, according to

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

Kant, in the origination of experience as we at present have it.

The question as to what the world is in itself, that is, before the mind has imposed its relations upon it, is of course absolutely unanswerable, because we never have knowledge that does not contain mental relations. We see objects in the world arranged in relations of time, space, cause and effect, substance and attribute, degree, etc., as inevitably as a man who wears blue spectacles sees things blue. These mental forms and relations are just the way the mind sees things, and we cannot know things except under these relations for the simple reason that it is the very nature of the mind to see objects and phenomena under these relations.

Further  
remarks.

The theories of both Berkeley and Kant had certain inadequate features which later psychology and epistemology have done much to correct. It would take us too far afield to indicate and discuss these inadequacies at any length, but they may be briefly suggested. Berkeley's weakness lay chiefly in omitting to notice the purposive features of our experience, in representing the

mind as a sort of receptacle which impartially assimilated materials presented to it. But modern psychology has had much to say about the selective and purposive aspects of the mind's activity, shown in selective attention, interest, and similar phenomena. The mind does not impartially receive any materials which may be presented to it, but is highly selective and exclusive in its activities, revealing at every step current interests and partialities. This fact only sheds additional light on the topic of the subjectivity of all our knowledge, and upon the fact that both our common knowledge and our science are largely built up about our human interests and needs, reflecting these interests and needs at every point and in every feature.

Kant's error, which was also the error of Hume before him, lay in the artificial separation of "matter" and "form," the sensory and the intellectual factors in cognition, a distinction which has been decidedly toned down, if not entirely destroyed, by the progress of more recent psychology and epistemology. Sensations do not come as isolated, uncompounded qualities which are united into wholes

by a subsequent process of mental synthesis. Experience is, in its most primitive form, relational. At any rate, relations are not stored, ready-made, in the mind, to be subsequently imposed upon the "raw material of sensation" in the external and mechanical way which Kant's too square-cut terminology strongly suggested.<sup>1</sup>

These qualifications do not, however, affect the very solid results at which Berkeley and Kant arrived, results which seem to me unavoidable and irrefutable. So far from matter's being the only reality, it has no independent reality at all. To quote the eloquent words of Walter Pater: "At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality; calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflection begins to act upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like a trick of magic; each object is loosed into a

<sup>1</sup> One of the most recent technical discussions of the Kantian doctrine of form and matter in knowledge is Gross, *Form and Materie des Erkennens*, Leipzig, 1910.

group of impressions—color, odor, texture—in the mind of the observer.<sup>1</sup> Physical objects have no existence whatever apart from conscious experience: what exists is minds and their experiences, and nothing exists which cannot be referred to, or explained by, minds and their experiences.

Extra-  
experiential  
objects.

The result reached may seem to many so novel and paradoxical as hardly to admit of serious consideration. It is one of the most firmly established beliefs of science, it will be said, that the evolution of the physical universe antedated the evolution of life and mind, and that the physical universe existed long before man had any knowledge of its existence; furthermore, it is clear that new parts of the physical universe, like planets and other heavenly bodies, are constantly being discovered. Does idealism mean to suggest that the physical universe did not exist before man came upon the scene, or that undiscovered planets and objects like the central parts of the earth, or a living man's brain, which have never been perceived, do not exist?

<sup>1</sup> The Renaissance, pp. 247-48.

Finite  
experience  
and the  
absolute  
experience;  
the world  
the object  
of God's  
thought.

These questions, which may seem somewhat disconcerting at first, are easily dealt with if we make a certain distinction which is of leading importance for our whole view of the universe. This is the distinction between man's experience and experience as such, between finite experiences and absolute experience. We, indeed, do not create the universe when we come to know it. Science is right: we merely discover it, and there are doubtless many objects of which we have no knowledge whatever. And yet we can give no intelligible account of them, as we have seen, except by reference to experience. It follows, therefore, that we must assume, in addition to an objectively existing universe, the existence of a mind or minds other than human, for which the universe exists, and in terms of whose experience alone it can be explained. Berkeley himself arrived at this momentous conclusion. What becomes of objects, it might be asked, like the objects in a room, when we leave the room and no longer perceive them? Do they continue to exist, or are they blotted out? They continue to exist, said Berkeley, but



they exist in the mind of God. A recent writer, Dr. Hastings Rashdall, has re-stated this same point with particular clearness: "Matter cannot intelligibly be supposed to exist apart from Mind; and yet it clearly does not exist merely for *our* minds. Each of us knows only one little bit of the Universe: all of us together do not know the whole. If the whole is to exist at all, there must be some one mind which knows the whole. The mind which is necessary to the *very existence* of the Universe is the mind that we call God."<sup>1</sup>

Thus does idealistic philosophy repeat the classical thought of Hebrew wisdom that all things that live and have being, live and have their being in God. And thus does philosophy lend serious import to the apparently superficial question sometimes asked, Could the universe continue to exist if God should withdraw from it? It assuredly could not if, as I have urged, it exists only as the object of God's thought. As Tennyson says in the Ancient Sage:

"If the Nameless should withdraw from all  
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world  
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark."

<sup>1</sup>Philosophy and Religion, p. 17.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

Two important questions naturally arise at this point. The statement has just been made that, owing to the fact that the universe is evidently vastly more inclusive and complete than our fragmentary knowledge of it, we have to assume the existence of a mind or minds for which the universe is eternally present. It is evident that all our theory absolutely calls for is the presence of mind in the universe. Whether mind exists in the form of one all-inclusive Mind, or whether mind specifies itself, and appears in the form of a society of minds, or selves, is a question which can be answered only on the basis of considerations of a special kind, which we have not yet discussed. This is not the place to go into this interesting question in detail, but one may say that the hypothesis of the unity of the Universal Mind seems on the whole to be the more plausible when one considers the unity and continuity of the physical world shown in the universality of natural law, in the similar physical and chemical constitution of distantly separated parts of the physical universe, and in the community of minds, the solidarity of our spiritual and social life,

## MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM

---

without which social coöperation would become entirely impossible. But we cannot pursue this subject further here.

Is God  
merely  
contem-  
plative?

There is another question, however, a solution of which is more pressing, and which we shall have to face and discuss somewhat fully. The theory of God's nature suggested by the metaphysical considerations adduced above is that God is the universal intelligence to which the whole of reality is eternally present. Now the question arises, Are we to interpret God's nature exclusively in terms of intelligence, after the fashion of Aristotle, or must we also think of Him in terms of will? Is omnipotence as genuine an aspect of the divine nature as omniscience? This question, together with other collateral issues, will be most naturally discussed in connection with the subject of causation and law which form the topic of our next section.

### LITERATURE

Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge, and Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous.*

Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy, Part III, Chapter IV.*

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

Fraser, Philosophy of Theism, Lecture III.

Green, Prolegomena to Ethics, Book I.

Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, or Watson, Selections  
from Kant.

Külpe, Introduction to Philosophy, §§ 16-19.

Lange, A History of Materialism.

Rashdall, Philosophy and Religion, Lecture I.

Taylor, Elements of Metaphysics, Book II, Chapter  
I, Book III, Chapter II.

IV

THE SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF NATURE:  
MECHANISM AND TELEOLOGY



## IV

# THE SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF NATURE: MECHANISM AND TELEOLOGY

## I

Inadequacy of the preceding discussion: the purposive aspects of experience.

In the preceding section we were led, by a series of strictly philosophical considerations, to the conclusion that the theory of an independently existing physical order is inconceivable, and that what we call matter is simply a name for a characteristic aspect of our experience as this is given us in perception. In the second place, the undeniable fact that the physical universe is infinitely greater than our human knowledge of it pointed unmistakably to the hypothesis of an Absolute Experience or Mind for whose intelligence the whole universe exists. The universe is the object of God's thought.

There is, however, a certain inadequacy in this way of formulating the matter which cannot have escaped the reader familiar with the main drifts of modern psychology and philosophy. We have already noticed, in

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

connection with Berkeley's theories, a rather serious weakness in this philosopher's view of the relation of the mind to its objects. Our criticism of Berkeley was to the effect that he represented the mind too much as a sort of receptacle which absorbs, as it were, or passively assimilates, any materials which may happen to be presented to it. Put in psychological terms, Berkeley's error lay in the too exclusive emphasis upon the cognitive or knowing aspects of our experience, and in the failure to recognize with sufficient distinctness the purposive and active aspects of consciousness which characterize it throughout. But, as every one knows, the old hard and fast distinction between thought and will as two independently existing functions, which has played such a large part in the psychological discussions of the past, has been decidedly obscured, if not entirely obliterated, by the progress of psychology. Perception and thought, in so far as they are attentively controlled processes, are just as truly illustrations of mental activity or will as are desire and choice; and, on the other hand, such processes as desire and choice involve many ideational



factors whose existence has often escaped our introspective observation. "Conative development," to use the words of Professor Stout, "is inseparably connected with cognitive development." In fact, "conation and cognition are simply different aspects of one and the same process."<sup>1</sup> Wundt also has stated the case forcefully: "So far as we know them from introspection and from external perception, consciousness and will are inseparably united. Will is not something which sometimes accrues to consciousness and is sometimes lacking: it is an integral property of consciousness."<sup>2</sup>

The same point can be illustrated in a somewhat different way. There are conceivably always two questions which we can ask in the presence of, say, a physical object. The first is, What is the object?—i. e., what is its structure? The second is, What relation has it to my interests and purposes? Now, we prob-

<sup>1</sup> Manual of Psychology, p. 581. Stout's whole treatment of psychology is an admirable illustration of the point urged here. But all the more recent books on psychology, such as those of James, Wundt, Külpe, Sully, Judd, Angell, Titchener and Royce, convey more or less clearly the idea of the concrete connection between the voluntary and the cognitive aspects of consciousness.

<sup>2</sup> Ethics, Part III, p. 7.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

ably never ask the first question without also asking the second. In fact, it is a serious question whether there is any such thing as the abstract "nature" of an object. If there is, it certainly does not form any part of our ordinary experience and our life. No object can ever enter importantly into our experience except as it is seen to have some bearing upon our current interests or purposes, either furthering them or thwarting them. This is of course the valuable truth which has been so strongly urged by modern voluntaristic psychology and philosophy, by pragmatism and similar phenomena.

If the above facts are true, it will likely prove extremely difficult to interpret the world in terms of an absolute experience without recognizing in this experience those purposive and active aspects which form such a striking part of our own finite experience. Indeed, if we had reason for believing God's experience to be radically different from our own, I do not see how we could stop short of absolute agnosticism on the whole subject of God's nature, for it is evidently impossible to understand any form of experience or life

## MECHANISM AND TELEOLOGY

---

for which we have no analogy in our own experience. This is a fundamental consideration which shows that theology must always remain to an important extent anthropomorphic in its conception of God and the world.<sup>1</sup>

The world  
as will. It will accordingly be a very natural hypothesis that the world is not merely the object of God's thought, as if God were an impartial spectator, merely, of a world whose course had been somehow independently determined, but that it represents also in a very real and important sense the expression of God's active and purposive will.

### II

I shall seek to support this conception for which we have such good psychological warrant by reference to certain conceptions which have played an enormously large part in the discussions of modern science and in popular religious thought, in many instances disturbing the latter not a little. I have reference here to two notions, mainly, the notion of natural causation and law, and the closely related conception of development

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for a further discussion of this point, Section VIII, below.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

or evolution. The plan of the present book precludes a very extended or technical treatment of these extremely important topics, interesting as such a discussion might prove to be; yet no attempt to estimate the place of religion in modern intellectual life would be complete without some reference to them. Even a summary discussion of these fundamental scientific notions will, I hope, reveal the fact that they are not in any respect incompatible with a humanistic and ethical interpretation of the world, but that they are, on the contrary, absolutely indispensable, not only for purposes of scientific description and explanation, but for purposes of philosophical and religious interpretation as well.

Popular  
meanings  
of causa-  
tion.

We shall do well to begin with the notion of causation and natural law.

One of the most common ways in which we are accustomed to view the world is as the embodiment of force or energy. The universe is not a collection of quiescent substances or bodies; bodies are mutable: the world is the scene of unceasing change. Now the common man and the scientist alike tend to connect the changes in the world in

## MECHANISM AND TELEOLOGY

---

causal series in such a way that any event in the series is thought of as being somehow determined by antecedent events in the same series. Every event, we say, has a cause. By an event's being determined we seem to mean that it could not help occurring, that its occurrence was enforced. And if the question is further raised why the event could not help occurring, the reply is either (1) that the event is brought about by "natural law," or (2) that it is produced by the previous event or events in the causal series. So fire melts wax, and it does so either because there is a "natural law" in virtue of which it does so, or because fire has the power of bringing this particular result about.

Two characteristics of this method of explanation of an event need here to be pointed out. One is the association of the idea of force, power, or causal efficiency with the notions of natural law and event. The natural law or the event brings the effect about in virtue of some compulsory force or power in the law or the event. The second leading characteristic of this type of explanation is that the explanation is always by

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

reference to certain antecedent events or forces. The type of explanation by reference to some end or purpose which the events tend to subserve or to realize has been completely superseded in scientific investigations by explanation of the mechanical type just described.

The problem  
of causal  
efficiency.

Now I wish to maintain, in what follows, four propositions. In the first place, there is no force or power in a so-called natural law to bring anything about. Natural law is simply a name or a formula to describe the particular way in which things happen. It is, therefore, at best merely descriptive of phenomenal sequences, and does not explain anything whatsoever, in the sense of telling why anything occurs.

Second, we have not the slightest outward evidence for believing that there exists any force or power in an external event to bring any other event about. Here again we can only tell what particular event will follow some other event. Why the one event should follow the other is again absolutely unexplained. So Hume, who first in modern

philosophy challenged the traditional idea of causal efficiency, reduced the phenomenon of causality to a mere subjective expectation that things will continue to happen in the future as we have observed them to happen in the past. The particular causal sequences, so-called, in nature are learned entirely through empirical observation of these sequences.

Natural science has of course largely followed Hume in rejecting as a useless scientific conception the older idea of causal efficiency in the sense of a productive force or power of compulsion in the cause, which somehow slips out of the cause and brings the effect about. Science today is content to describe how events happen; it does not pretend to say why they happen as they do. Ether waves of a given length will produce red; of another, violet. But why the one kind of wave should produce one color and another kind of wave another is a question no scientist would undertake to answer.

Source of  
the idea of  
power.

Third. If we are right in the assertion that we do not derive the notion of power or energy from the observation of the actual sequences which we observe

in the physical world, the question naturally arises as to the source from which we do derive this idea. The answer is, From our own inner life. Nowhere else in the universe do we get an immediate, first-hand knowledge of activity or power, but we do get it here. Perhaps the best illustration of a form of self-activity of which we have immediate and direct knowledge is a process of methodical thought along, say, some scientific or political topic. Such a process of reflection involves certain processes of analysis and combination which cannot go on without the exercise of active attention and effort. That the process in question really involves self-activity is well illustrated by imagining the process interrupted by a sudden twinge of toothache or gout. Here I at once become conscious of the presence of an experience which is evidently not due to my own purposive activity. The immediate feeling of activity in the one case and of passivity in the other is so unmistakable as not to leave us in doubt as to our being genuine sources of energy or power.

Nor does the power to direct my thought



exhaust itself in producing the course of thought. No, my thought may pass immediately over into movements of my tongue, and may produce the most striking physical results. My words may excite a mutiny, cause men to "go fetch fire, pluck down benches, pluck down forms, windows, anything."<sup>1</sup> They may pass into movements of my hands and may result in a philosophical treatise, or a political tract, which may change the intellectual or the political map of Europe.

The experience of power is of course gotten in various other contexts, but these contexts are, all of them, personal. We get it when we hold a door against a person who is trying to force his way into the room; or when we make our way against a blinding snow storm, or try to hold our own against an opponent in a wrestling match. The difference between our experience in observing the impact of two billiard balls and our experience in making our way against a storm is decisive and ultimate. In the first case we get nothing except an experience of sequence; in the second case

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene 2.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

we get an experience of causal efficiency or power. When afterwards we witness events in external nature which we have often seen arise as the result of our volitions, it is but natural that we should in imagination transfer the power which we feel to exist in ourselves to inanimate objects, when they appear to give rise to events and changes in the world. To quote the brilliant Martineau: "In the apprehension of the human observer, using his most human faculty, this visible world is folded round and steeped in a sea of life, whence enters all that rises, and whither return the generations that pass away. . . . Doubtless, it is an ascription to nature, on the part of the observer, of a life like his own; in the boundless mirror of the earth and sky, he sees, as the figures of events flit by, the reflected image of himself. But for his living spirit, he could not move; and but for a living spirit, they could not move. Just as when, standing face to face with his fellows, he reads the glance of the eye, the sudden start, or the wringing of the hands, and refers them home to their source within the viewless soul of another; so with dimmer

## MECHANISM AND TELEOLOGY

---

and more wondering suspicion does he discern, behind the looks and movements of nature, a Mind, that is the seat of every power, and the spring of every change. You may laugh at so simple a philosophy; but how else would you have him proceed? Does he not, for this explanation, go straight to the only cause which he knows? He is familiar with power in himself alone; and in himself it is Will; and he has no other element than will to be charged with the power of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Inadequacy  
of mechan-  
ical explana-  
tion; expla-  
nation by  
end or  
purpose.

I wish to maintain, in the fourth place, that the whole method of explaining an event by referring it to antecedent events in a causal series is inadequate and one-sided, and that no event is truly explained until it is explained teleologically, i. e., until the event is viewed as a stage or step in the realization of some end or purpose. Mechanical explanation, by reference to antecedent events, is one type of explanation, and it doubtless has its rightful place and justification; but there are many processes in the world whose expla-

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, pp. 2-3.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

nation is clearly one-sided and lame without the employment of teleological categories like interests, ends and purposes.

To illustrate this, let us take the most perfect type of a mechanism with which we are acquainted, a machine. Every movement of every part of a machine could be completely explained, in the mechanical sense of explanation, by referring it to some previous movement. But would any part of the machine ever have moved if there had not been an interest on the part of some person to have the machine move? Or take a whole network of mechanical contrivances like a street railway system. Could it be reasonably maintained that the movements of the cars were completely explained by tracing them back to their mechanical antecedents in the shape of wheels, wires, electric currents, and the like? Would the street car system ever have existed, would a single wheel ever have turned on its axle, if it had not been for the system of human purposes and interests which are hourly subserved by the street car system? The movements of various parts of the typewriter with which I am

writing the present sentence are obviously not fully explained by referring each separate movement to some previous movement or system of movements, according to the laws of mechanics. The movements of the machine are inexplicable unless reference is also made to the fact that they are necessary steps or stages in the realization of my present purpose, the purpose, namely, of discussing the relation of mechanism and design, of writing a book on philosophy, etc.

So with events in my own life. They can doubtless be explained by enumerating the various biological and physiological antecedents which precede the events in the order of time, and the various physiological and psychological laws according to which, as we say, the events in question originate. But no event or occurrence in my life like, say, the process of acquiring an education, can be explained in these terms exclusively. The process of acquiring an education becomes really intelligible only when I treat it as a moment or step in the realization of some dominant interest or purpose. I acquire an education in order to carry out my parents'

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

wishes, or to gain increased social recognition, or to become a more useful member of society, etc.

The scientific method of studying the structure of reality and of tracing its phenomenal sequences is not inaptly illustrated by the activity of the proofreader who examines the detailed verbal and grammatical structure of a book without any attention to the meaning either of the separate sentences or of the book as a whole. In order to appreciate the meaning of the book, the reader, like the proofreader, must understand the separate words, and their grammatical connections, but he must do more than that: he must penetrate beyond these to their inner meaning. Science may be said to occupy itself primarily, if not entirely, with the morphology, the grammar of nature, observing its phenomena and their sequential connections; philosophy, as the science of meaning, uses the outward facts and laws of nature as the key, merely, to its inner significance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For an interesting illustration of the difference between the observation of mere phenomena and the apprehension of their inner meaning, see p. 218, note 1.

## MECHANISM AND TELEOLOGY

---

Law and  
purpose not  
incompati-  
ble but com-  
plementary  
concep-  
tions.

We have arrived at a principle of the greatest importance for our whole view of the world in which we live, the principle, namely, that mechanical explanation, in terms of causation and natural law, and teleological explanation, in terms of purpose and will, are not incompatible kinds of explanation, but that they rather supplement and complete each other. In fact, the only way to realize the various ends and purposes which characterize us is to take advantage of those natural causes and laws of nature with which our experience has acquainted us. I shall have more success in realizing my present purpose of writing out my thoughts if I make use of the mechanical device known as a typewriter than if I depend upon writing in long hand. Or, to take another illustration, my success in making a flight through the air will depend entirely upon my success in utilizing the natural agencies and laws at my command. They *can* be utilized and I *can* fly. But I shall not succeed in carrying out my purpose of flying if I deliberately set out to disregard the various physical and mechanical laws

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

with the existence of which my experience has acquainted me.

The idea that the reign of natural law is incompatible with the realization of purpose is a very curious one, and it is nothing short of marvellous how it has ever gained the wide circulation which it appears to enjoy among intelligent people. It is about as if we should maintain that because hats are made by machinery (the illustration, I think, is Professor James') they cannot on that account fit human heads, or that because railway engines are propelled by steam power, and run on steel rails, they cannot get anywhere! A very little reflection, however, will make it sufficiently evident that the only condition under which it would become impossible to make hats fit heads, and to make trains arrive at their intended destinations, is for natural law to become inoperative, so that steel would cease to be rigid, water cease to turn into steam when heated, etc. Then all interests alike would remain unrealized, all purposes unfulfilled, and life itself become a sheer impossibility.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The more one reflects on the matter the more clearly one feels that the uniformity of nature is the one most important argument for



III

Some results  
of the un-  
warranted  
opposition of  
law and pur-  
pose.

The notion that natural causation is incompatible with purpose has had some bizarre applications in philosophy and theology. Human purposes cannot be realized because the medium for their realization, the human will, is, like everything else in the universe, subject to natural law. The human will is not free because, forsooth, nothing in the universe is free! There is of course no length to which men will not go when they have once lost their feeling for reality. Personality is here reduced to a lower rank than physical objects. The behavior of a physical object is, from a physical point of view, determined just as much by its own nature as it is by the nature of the forces which influence it. A stone, for example, weighing ten pounds cannot be moved out of its place by a force of ten ounces. But a man's character is supposed to be so

---

theism which can be produced. That the ground is firm under our feet, that water slakes and fire burns, that bodies gravitate, that the sun rises and sets and the seasons recur,—that nature is without shadow or turning, this is the prime condition on which life can be good.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

thoroughly the victim of its surroundings as to have its actions determined by forces lying entirely outside it. A very little attention to the facts of everyday experience would of course show that a man's action is at least partly determined by his character, whatever the influences of his surroundings may have to do with it. So one man will, for a consideration, waylay another and cold-bloodedly murder him. A man of different character will, if offered the same sum of money for the same purpose, turn the would-be briber over to the police.

And of na-  
ture and  
God.

A theological result of a very mischievous kind that has issued from the sharp opposition of the notions of law and purpose is a sort of division of labor between nature and God. It is as if nature, operating by means of natural law, did the bulk of the world's work, while God is reserved to account for alleged breaches of law, interruptions, and interpositions of various and sundry kinds. Now it is evident that if God's power is invoked only to account for breaks, exceptions, and "things science cannot explain," the scope of God's power will be

## MECHANISM AND TELEOLOGY

---

constantly restricted as the range of scientific knowledge is extended, and these homeless facts are one by one brought into relation with a general system of law and order. Modern thought, with its sublime generalizations, has driven us to the belief in the divine immanence in all things. The sharp dividing line between the natural and the supernatural is gradually becoming less distinct, and will eventually be completely obliterated with our increasing insight and optimism. With theological bankruptcy staring us in the face, we have been driven to the recognition of the larger truth that the natural roots in the supernatural, and that the supernatural, in turn, manifests itself in the ordinary, everyday facts and forms of our living experience. The laws of nature are not so many obstacles in the path of the divine purpose: they are the very means and methods by which this purpose is constantly being realized and fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

Evolution  
both a  
causal and  
a purposive  
process.

The theory of evolution or development furnishes a striking illustration of the confusion which has resulted from an awkward opposition

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bowne, *The Immanence of God*, Essay I.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

of the mechanical category of natural causation and the teleological category of purpose.

The aspect of the theory of evolution which has resulted in a great deal of religious disturbance was the suggestion which was often conveyed by writers on evolution that evolution was a perfectly "natural" process, accounted for by reference to such purely natural agencies as chance variation, natural selection of the fittest, etc., and that the older theories of the universe as the illustration of purposive intelligence were accordingly disproved. Nothing could be more unintelligent. The only possible source of religious disturbance was the conviction on the part of evolutionary writers that the universe arrived at its present state of completeness gradually, through the accumulation of the effects of myriads of inconspicuous processes and changes. It is of course difficult to take this point seriously. What possible difference can it make to a theistic interpretation of the world whether we regard it as the product of a comparatively slow or a comparatively rapid process of creation? A moment's reflection would of course show that the

process of creation is still incomplete, and that we have no very conclusive reason for believing that it will ever be entirely completed.<sup>1</sup>

The theory of evolution, it must be evident, is, like natural law, merely an account of the way things happen, and is, so far, merely descriptive in character. What explanation there is, is of course almost altogether of the mechanical type discussed above, explanation, that is, by reference to certain mechanical agents like natural selection, heredity, etc., which are supposed to bring evolution about. I do not here raise the question whether science is justified in neglecting teleological

<sup>1</sup>The late Professor Bowne has illustrated the irrelevancy of the whole discussion by the following story: "An Eastern king was seated in a garden, and one of his counselors was speaking of the wonderful works of God. 'Show me a sign,' said the king, 'and I will believe.' 'Here are four acorns,' said the counselor; 'will your majesty plant them in the ground, and then stoop down for a moment and look into this clear pool of water?' The king did so. 'Now,' said the other, 'Look up.' The king looked up and saw four oak trees where he had planted the acorns. 'Wonderful!' he exclaimed; 'this is indeed the work of God.' 'How long were you looking into the water?' asked the counselor. 'Only a second,' said the king. 'Eighty years have passed as a second,' said the other. The king looked at his garments; they were threadbare. He looked at his reflection in the water; he had become an old man. 'There is no miracle here, then,' he said angrily. 'Yes,' said the other; 'it is God's work, whether he do it in one second or in eighty years.'" *The Immanence of God*, pp. 29-30.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

categories in its investigations. It very likely is. I only wish to urge that, in so far as evolution confines itself to the enumeration of antecedent events of a mechanical kind, it shares the inadequacy of mechanical explanation in general. That inadequacy has been sufficiently discussed already, and there is no need to reiterate the arguments here. I contend (though I fear the point is too technical for adequate discussion here) that evolution always implies an end or plan in the progressive realization of which evolution consists, and that evolution would become unrecognizable as such without the recognition of such an end, result or plan.<sup>1</sup> We have abundant evidence in the organic world, at least, not only that certain results are systematically realized, but that they are in innumerable instances even anticipated and actually striven towards.

The will to  
struggle.

The impulse in nature to strive and struggle is, in fact, the one most striking fact about nature, but it is the very fact which evolutionary theories either

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for a fuller discussion of this, Taylor, *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 265 ff., and literature cited there.

entirely neglect or assume to be of little significance. Without the existence in the universe of the impulse to strive, the will to live, to use Schopenhauer's phrase, natural selection would become inoperative, and the whole machinery of evolution would come to a standstill. This point has been forcefully urged by Paulsen: "The presupposition of development is, of course, the will to live, the will to struggle for existence, common to all beings taking part in evolution. They do not suffer the development passively, they are not, like the pebbles in the brook, pushed into a new form by mechanical causes acting from without. Their own inner activity is the absolute condition of the efficacy of natural selection. The struggle for existence is not imposed upon individuals from without; it is their own will to fight the battle; and without this will . . . there could be no such struggle for existence at all."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Philosophy, pp. 185-6. Cf. the following from the brilliant work of Weber on the History of European Philosophy: "Now, we may ask ourselves the question: Does not the Darwinian principle, which materialists invoke with such confidence, corroborate, rather than overturn, the hypothesis of immanent teleology? Is it really true that the struggle for existence is a first cause and exclusively mechanical? Does not the struggle for life, in turn,

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

Summary. It will be well to bring together, at this point, the main conclusions at which we have arrived in the present section. (1) We saw at the outset that any attempt to interpret the absolute experience in terms of pure thought would likely be foredoomed to failure for the reason that a purely cognitive form of experience is something with which we have no acquaintance, and for which we have no psychological warrant whatsoever. In all experience which we know, the cognitive and volitional features are inextricably woven together into one concrete, unitary whole of mental life. (2) The conviction that experience contains volitional and active features we found to be apparently corroborated by the language of popular thought and of science which tends constantly to interpret the world in terms of force or energy. (3) A closer examination of the changes and events which occur in nature showed us, however,

---

presuppose Schopenhauer's will to live, will or effort, without which, according to the profound remark of Leibniz, there can be no substance? Does it not, therefore, presuppose an anterior, superior and immaterial cause? What can the formula: struggle for existence, mean, except: struggle *in order to exist?*" A History of Philosophy, English translation, p. 572. See also my little book on Bergson, especially Section VII.



that we do not get any direct, first-hand acquaintance through these with anything corresponding to the notions of force or energy. All that we can actually observe in nature is temporal sequence. (4) The concept of force or energy we found to be derived from our own inner experience, in such volitional phenomena as bodily effort and purposively controlled thought. The only source of energy or power of which we have any direct knowledge is, accordingly, personality or will. The idea of energy or efficiency which we ascribe to objects in nature, or to natural law, is in all probability transferred into nature in virtue of the inevitable tendency to interpret all things in terms of our own experience. In this view, natural law is of course no force or energy bringing things about: it is simply a name or a formula descriptive of the way things actually happen in nature. So with evolution. Evolution is simply an account of the way the world probably arrived at its present state of completeness. It gives an account, in so far as it can, of the machinery, so to speak, by means of which certain results are brought

about. The ultimate source of energy which makes the world a dynamic rather than a quiescent thing, which makes it pulsate with life and movement, and carries it forward through successive stages of development,—the power itself, in short, which produces evolution, is as much hidden from our view, if we confine ourselves to the study of external phenomena, as before evolutionary theories were ever propounded. (5) As a collateral result of our whole discussion of natural law and of evolution we were led to a general criticism of the whole method of explaining events by merely mechanical causes, natural laws, etc. Such explanation always remains one-sided and inadequate until it is supplemented by the use of certain teleological categories such as ends, interests and purposes. If consideration of these is excluded, many events in nature and in human life remain totally unintelligible. The very terms change, evolution, progress, regression, etc., so freely employed by current evolutionary science, are found to be meaningless, when closely examined, except when considered in connection with certain results or ends attained in

the process of evolution. The movement of a physical object, even, can be noted and measured only by making reference to some objective point from which or towards which the movement is taking place.

The results of evolution, when once observed, may thus shed a flood of light upon the thousands of changes which have led up to those results, changes which had previously been without meaning:

“From the grand result,  
 A supplementary reflux of light  
 Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains  
 Each back step in the circle.”<sup>1</sup>

So far from being able, therefore, to explain completely the later products of evolution by the earlier, life and mind, for example, by their lifeless antecedents, we may be obliged to explain the earlier by the later, or, more accurately, by reference to the plan or purpose involved in the process as a whole, and implicit at its every stage. Man's lowly origin in the form of his animal antecedents has often been made the occasion for belittling his present status and his possibilities. But this is both

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *Paracelsus*, V.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

unphilosophical and unfair. "We have lost the memorials of our extraction," says the Roman Stoic, "in truth it matters not whence we come, but whither we go."

"If once but dust or ape or worm,  
A growing brain and then a soul,  
Sure these are but prophetic germ  
Of that which makes our circle whole."

The natural laws which obtain in the world, and through which evolution works, are of course not so many hindrances to the realization of God's purposes: they are the very means and ways through which these purposes get their constant fulfilment. The vast and varied examples of law and power throughout all nature, from the swelling bud that feels its way into the sunlight, and the blade of growing grass, to the star that holds its course through the immensities, and the youth who presses forward to reach his ideal,—these are the silent witnesses, all, of that indwelling Presence

"From whom all being emanates, all power  
Proceeds; in whom is life forevermore."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *In Memoriam*.

# MECHANISM AND TELEOLOGY

---

## LITERATURE

- Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, and Wilm, Bergson.  
Bowne, *Personalism*.  
Fullerton, *A System of Metaphysics*, Chapter XV.  
Haldane, *The Pathway to Reality*, Book II, Lecture III.  
Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*.  
Janet, *Final Causes*.  
Külpe, *Introduction to Philosophy*, § 20.  
Paulsen, *Introduction to Philosophy*, Chapter II.  
Pearson, *A Grammar of Science*, Chapters III and VIII.  
Rashdall, *Philosophy and Religion*, Lecture II.  
Taylor, *Elements of Metaphysics*, Book III, Chapter III.



V

THE VALUE OF LIFE: OPTIMISM  
AND PESSIMISM





## V

# THE VALUE OF LIFE: OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

The central  
problem of  
religion:  
Is life  
good on the  
whole?

The reader who has followed the discussion attentively so far will have noticed that, although we have reached an essentially idealistic view of the world by interpreting reality in terms of the thought and will of an absolute Experience, we have not yet given such an interpretation of it as the religious consciousness requires. We found at the outset that religion contains the conviction that the universe is divine, meaning by that that the events in the universe are controlled in view of a supreme and lasting good. It is not sufficient for the purposes of religious adoration and worship, for example, to interpret the universe in terms of power, or even of purpose, as we did in the last section. The existence of power in the universe is undisputed. Its beneficent effects and its terrible ravages are too varied and striking to be easily overlooked. The impor-

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

tant question which remains is whether the power at the heart of things is good. That this question presents a very troublesome problem no one who has reflected on the matter at all will for a moment deny. The assertions that nature is "red of tooth and claw," and that "nothing walks with aimless feet," are indeed widely discrepant attitudes which it will not be easy to bring together under a single world-view. The great poets, like Browning and Tennyson, have felt the problem of evil to be both persistent and difficult, and the tendency of modern philosophy has been to rest the emphasis more and more stably and firmly upon this problem as the central problem of theism. Do the energies in the universe operate blindly, indifferent to ethical distinctions, or even maliciously, or can we detect, amid the vast forces with which the world fairly teems and palpitates, evidences of goodness and love?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A friend proposed to the late F. W. H. Myers the following question: "What is the thing which above all others you would like to know? If you could ask the Sphinx one question, and only one, what would the question be?" After a moment's silence Myers replied: "I think it would be this: Is the universe friendly?"

## I

The terms  
of the  
problem;  
definition  
of good.

How can this question be answered? Only, I conceive, through the study of life as we actually live it, and through the study of the larger life of humanity as this is depicted to us in the historical, literary and biographical records of the great reporters and confessors of human experience now so freely accessible to us. It is futile, in other words, to begin, after the fashion of the older theodicies, with the goodness of God, and to argue from this to the essential goodness of the world. Our knowledge of God, if we have such knowledge, must be derived from the manifestations of his nature which we find in the world in which we live. If the world were bad, I do not see that we have any ground whatever for asserting the goodness of God, unless, indeed, God had nothing to do with the world, or were powerless to control it. But such an impotent God could, I suppose, not be called good in the usual acceptance of that term.

A study of life and literature will soon convince us that the universe contains much good

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

and happiness, as well as much evil and misery. This is evidently not the "best of all possible worlds." That it would not be is precisely what we might have expected from the consideration that perfect happiness can come only as a result of perfect adaptation to environment. But perfect adaptation to environment can at any one time only be approximated, owing to the fact that both the individual and the environment are constantly changing. The precise problem that would accordingly seem to call for solution is the problem whether life contains more good than evil, or whether life is good on the whole.

The solution of this problem is evidently beset with many difficulties. In the first place, what do we mean by anything's being good? Nothing can be judged to be good or bad, I take it, apart from need or desire. In a lifeless universe the distinction between good and bad would evidently be unmeaning; but as soon as life appears, with its characteristic biases and interests, the basis for the distinction exists. But desires are very diverse in their character. One of the most common and ineradicable distinctions, for example, is

the deep-lying distinction between lower and higher desires, between legitimate and illegitimate desires. Now is anything good which satisfies desire, irrespective of the ethical quality of the desire, as some writers seem to assume, or shall we call only that good which satisfies desires which we can ethically approve? To judge anything to be good, means, I answer, to judge it to be in harmony with those desires which we can ethically approve, as distinguished from those desires which, while we have them, we recognize as comparatively worthless or wrong.<sup>1</sup> The distinction is an extremely important one. Many persons doubtless fail to attain happiness<sup>2</sup> because they seek it through the wrong objects, and in directions and pursuits not capable of yielding it. These directions and pursuits are often ethically worthless or bad. But we should hardly be ready to condemn the universe on account of the unhappiness which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. McTaggart, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> I assume here that happiness makes life valuable, and I do not wish to argue the question here. I presume that no one would care to assert that it is not a constituent part of the good, even if it cannot be said to be the only constituent.

it contained if this unhappiness is due to man's folly, or his moral unworthiness.

But, though the problem of the value of life is greatly simplified by eliminating from consideration desires which fail to result in happiness because they are misdirected or wrong, it is still far from being solved. For there are doubtless many desires and needs clearly recognized as ethically legitimate which life leaves unsatisfied. If man's unhappiness is often due to his own dulness and moral unworthiness, it also often comes, as Carlyle has profoundly remarked, of man's greatness. It is on account of the fact that there exists in him an infinite aspiration that the real world about him oppresses him with its sordid meanness. His misery springs from the vague fear that, after all, the soul of the world may not be just, and that the good may, after all, not be the deepest and most enduring reality, as Plato nobly taught. It is the defeat of the good, if it is indeed defeated, that offers the most troublesome problem which religious optimism has to face.

## II

Has life  
ethical  
worth? Dif-  
ficulties of  
the question

The question whether life has value, even in the sense of enabling us to gain happiness through the satisfaction of legitimate desires, is highly ambiguous. When closely examined, it will be found to be reducible to at least three questions which admit of being treated separately. The first is, Does the life of a given individual contain more happiness than misery? The second is, Does the life of all men together, taken at the present time, yield a balance of happiness? And, finally, the question may mean, Does the future of the race promise an increase of happiness and a diminution of misery? In other words, is there progress?

The answers to all these questions are exceedingly difficult. The problem of the comparative amounts of happiness and misery in the life of a single individual would seem to be the easiest of solution. But even here we encounter fundamental difficulties. The only testimony available on the point is that of the individual himself, and we know that the testimony of a person on the subject of his

own life is extremely untrustworthy. The answer, in the first place, will be influenced profoundly by the feeling of the moment. All life, no matter how successful it may have been, seems a failure to the man whose spirits have suffered momentary depression. A person cannot in a moment of despondency feel the full value of his life: he feels only where the shoe pinches. Moreover, the pleasures and pains entering into an individual life are so varied in their quality that it seems impossible to reduce them to a common denominator so as to be able to compare them. The phrases, "balance of pleasure," "balance of pain," etc., frequently used by ethical writers, do indeed suggest the possibility of an hedonic calculus. But it is safe to say that no philosopher ever undertook the actual calculation of pleasures and pains without being convinced of the utter futility of the undertaking.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paulsen ridicules the hedonic calculus by the following: Receipts in pleasure: 1. Slept well—equal so many units; 2. Enjoyed my breakfast; 3. Read a chapter from a good book; 4. Received a letter from a friend; etc. Pain: Read a disagreeable story in a paper; 2. Received a tiresome visit; 3. Disturbed by a neighbor's piano; 4. Ate burnt soup; etc. The philosopher is requested to insert the proper amounts in the proper places. *A System of Ethics*, pp. 289-90.



It might, indeed, be said in answer to this that the fact that men refrain from suicide amounts to a judgment of approval of life. This consideration lacks force for a number of reasons. In the first place, the act of self-destruction, when it is committed, is usually committed in a moment of deep despondency such as was referred to above, and can, on that account, not be considered as representing the calm judgment of life, such as would be rendered if the person concerned were in a normal state of mind. Second, persons who are genuine pessimists regarding the value of their lives nevertheless refrain from suicide from the fear of causing pain to others. Some people, at least, are restrained from the act of suicide by a fear of future punishment.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, life is guarded by the very powerful instinct of self-preservation, which is often strong enough to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act III, Scene I:

“— Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscovered country from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?”

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

override the repeated judgment and dictate of reason, much as the sexual and other powerful instincts carry the day even though rational considerations forbid their gratification.<sup>1</sup>

When we pass to the second question, our difficulties only increase. How can the comparative happiness of two lives be measured when so much depends upon the degree of sensitiveness, and the peculiarity of endowment, intellectual, artistic, ethical, etc., of the persons concerned, making them susceptible of very different degrees and grades of happiness? But, irrespective of these personal differences, it seems impossible to balance one man's happiness against the misery of another so as to say whether life is good or bad on the whole. It seems, when we think about the matter closely, that each individual must in some sense be considered by himself, and as having claims to happiness which cannot be satisfied by any amount of happiness possessed by other persons. To borrow a striking illustration from Mr. McTaggart, a universe in

<sup>1</sup> This is amusingly illustrated by the anecdote of the man who was on his way to the river to commit suicide, but who promptly climbed a tree when attacked by a ferocious bull.

which three people out of every five were in heaven and two in every five in hell might have a greater amount of happiness in it than of misery. But we should not on that account call the universe good.<sup>1</sup> This brings out a fundamental antinomy which is troublesome enough to make those pause who have a ready solution of the riddle of the universe. It seems indeed irrational and perhaps immoral for a man to pray (may he even hope?) for the wind to fill his sails when the same wind would carry his neighbor's bark away from its goal. And the world is doubtless more interesting and more prosperous with a hundred fleets sailing its seas than it would be if it contained only one lone and leaky vessel. Still, it seems to be asking too much to expect a man to pronounce the world good if his own life and fortunes are about to be involved in utter ruin, even if the rest of the world should not be a whit the less happy for it. The world doubtless is good for the woodpecker about to draw the grub out from its cozy hiding-place. But the worm could hardly be expected to take the outside point of view. The

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

individual, says Professor Bowne somewhere, enforcing the same point, can never be used merely as fuel for the warming of society.

The answer to the third question, whether the evolution of life will lead to an increase of happiness and a diminution of misery, that is, whether there is progress, would seem still more problematical. If we cannot successfully estimate the value of the life we observe around us, how can we hope to estimate the value of life under future conditions the nature of which is almost entirely hidden from us? Our only resource here is to certain scientific considerations of a general kind which may throw an unexpected light on the problem. They will, I hope, aid us, not only in dealing with the problem of progress, but also with the general question of the value of the life we now live.

### III

The contribution of biology; pleasure feeling and welfare.

There are three principles of a biological sort which seem to provide for the constant elimination of defective and unfelicitous forms of life, and the preferential selection of those

## OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

---

forms most completely adapted to prevailing conditions of life, forms which, because so adapted, must have a positive hedonic value.

The first of these is the general connection which exists between physical welfare and pleasure feeling, high physical vitality being accompanied by a strongly marked pleasure tone, the pleasure tone reacting favorably, in turn, upon physical welfare. Pleasure, as the accompaniment of organic health, must therefore be the rule, and pain, the symptom of organic disturbance, the exception for all living creatures. Almost all biologists have pointed out this fact, but philosophers have not often drawn the consequences of it for the theory of optimism and pessimism. To bring out the full force of the principle, let us imagine nature to be so constructed as to eliminate creatures whenever their life attained a sufficient pleasure tone to render them fairly comfortable, and to select for survival creatures whose life was intrinsically painful, and whose prospects of life would not decrease no matter how wretched their existence became. Under such conditions the

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

philosopher with optimistic leanings would evidently have enough to do to keep him at least healthfully employed! As it is, an automatic limit seems to be set to the amount of pain. After pain has increased to a certain point, death comes as a release. And after death there is no more pain.

But then even happy creatures do not live forever, and ill-adapted and wretched creatures are constantly being produced and for a time maintained. Thus our argument seems after all to be self-refuting. If life is valuable, it might be said, then the interruption of it through death must be an evil. And if death is a good, it can be such only on the assumption that it comes as a release from an undesirable existence. The force of this must of course be granted. The hope of completely explaining evil is one which we may as well definitely abandon as futile. This is evidently not the best of all possible worlds, and we have already confessed so much. It is true that the argument assumes that death brings destruction to all the objects which make life valuable, an assumption which we need not let pass unchallenged. I hope to deal with this sub-

## OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

---

ject somewhat fully in another section, where the nature and significance of death will, I hope, appear in a different light from the usual, and where the antithesis between death and life will be shown to be not so sharp as that commonly felt.

The effects  
of hered-  
ity and  
of sexual  
selection.

There is a second principle which is closely related to the one just discussed, and which makes the hypothesis that life is valuable, and that it will become more valuable with the passing of time, an extremely reasonable one. There is going on in nature a constant process of perfecting the physical features of man through the survival and propagation of the more perfect forms, those best adapted to cope with the physical and animal environments in the midst of which their life is cast. The tendency of this principle would evidently be to raise man to a higher level of life as time passes. The survival of the more efficient forms is guaranteed by the greater resistance which these forms are able to offer to the mechanical action of the environment. That they will propagate their kind is rendered comparatively certain, not only on account

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

of the greater fertility which they would as a rule possess, but owing to the operation of another principle of considerable importance, the principle of sexual selection, according to which individuals show a preference in mating for individuals of the opposite sex showing superiority of strength, physical features, mode of behavior, adornment, etc. The high physical development and extreme beauty of many of the lower animals are explained in this manner. Examples of the preferential selection of mates abound in the literature of biology. Bechstein, a life-long observer of bird behavior, asserts that the female canary always chooses the best singer, and that in a state of nature the female finch selects that mate out of a hundred whose notes please her most.<sup>1</sup> Of the American night hawks, again, it is said that their "manner of flying is a good deal modified at the love season. The male employs the most wonderful evolutions to give expression to his feelings, conducting them with the greatest rapidity and agility in the sight of

<sup>1</sup> Darwin, *Descent of Man*, Vol. II, p. 58.



his chosen mate, or to put to rout a rival.”<sup>1</sup> The last statement brings out the important point that success in courtship depends upon his ability to kill or to intimidate his rival, as well as upon his picturesqueness of behavior and his physical display in the presence of his mate. Thus, as Darwin remarks, the law of battle coöperates with preferential mating in the development of animal life, the most defiant, powerful and mettlesome male monopolizing the favors of his chosen mate.

The principle of sexual selection does not of course operate uniformly at different levels of animal life, and much of the controversy which has raged over the principle is due to the failure to make this clear. Some have denied any large influence to this factor on the ground that there are no males or females among the lower animals which go unmated. This is perhaps true for lower animals, but it is evidently of little force as applied to mankind, for there are here both males and females that never marry, and that do not transmit their traits. Whatever, therefore, may be the case among the lower animals, the princi-

<sup>1</sup> Audubon, quoted by C. Lloyd Morgan, *Animal Behavior*, p. 261.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

ple of sexual selection, which prefers some individuals over others as bearers of offspring, remains for mankind of distinct importance. In human society, to be sure, the operation of the principle becomes considerably complicated by the interference with the natural mating instinct on the part of intelligence. Success in mating now no longer depends upon the ferocity and brute strength of the male, nor upon the physical attractiveness of the female, as in the case of lower creatures. Physical superiority is now forced to compete with mental eminence or sprightliness, with the possession of wealth, of social prestige, and the like, and often with certain merely conventional marks of superiority, which may in reality be symptoms of degeneracy, like slightness of figure, pallor, a dependent disposition, etc., persons possessing these traits being often preferred to those possessing physical robustness and strength of personality. Fortunately for the welfare of the race, the instincts of nature are difficult to crush out or to suppress for long at a time, and physical perfection, the indispensable basis of all subsequent mental and spiritual achievement, continues to com-

## OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

---

pete successfully with its rival factors in the fascination it exercises over the opposite sex. What type of person will be selected in marriage will clearly depend upon the conceptions of the persons concerned as to what constitutes physical and mental superiority. It may be safely assumed, however, that natural instinct, aided by man's growing intelligence, will not stray far from the right path.<sup>1</sup> The young but very active science of eugenics, the science of being born well, as someone has defined it, promises to do much in the near future toward the dissemination of scientific knowledge regarding important subjects like heredity, and toward securing legal enactments forbidding the marriage of the unfit, thus rendering impossible the transmission of traits making for individual and social degeneracy. How successful these laudable efforts will be, the future only can tell. It is clear that no recent movement in science has promised so much for the betterment of mankind. In marriage, as well as in their other acts, men

<sup>1</sup> Some genuine dangers to social progress from the interference with the instinctive operation of the sex instinct by intelligence are strongly presented by McDougall, *Social Psychology*, Chapter X.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

are usually desirous of doing the best they can for themselves. The main thing which therefore seems requisite for race betterment is an increase in intelligence concerning the conditions and laws of human welfare. And this, there is every reason for believing, will occur.<sup>1</sup>

Social heredity. A third and most important source of progress is due to the valuable ability of man to profit from his past experience, and to transmit, through what Professor Baldwin has called "social heredity," its results to succeeding generations. To the beneficent results of physical inheritance, handing down those physical traits which have proved most useful in the struggle for life, are thus added the results of social inheritance, the objectified products of man's brain, in the form of science, letters, arts, inventions, religions, customs, laws and institutions. The significance of this fact for civilization and the

<sup>1</sup> The most important names for the study of eugenics are those of Karl Pearson, Francis Galton, Davenport, Whetham and Mrs. Whetham. The progress of eugenics has been well outlined by Field, *The Progress of Eugenics*. A good popular presentation of the subject is Kellicott, *The Social Direction of Human Evolution*. Salleeby's *Parenthood and Race Culture* is readable, but less valuable and reliable than the other works enumerated.

welfare of man cannot easily be exaggerated. It is only through the possibility of each generation's beginning where the former left off that the enormous advance of modern civilization has been made possible. The progress of science has already largely banished fear and superstition, and has made man at home in the world. Through tools and other mechanical inventions man has become, and is becoming, the master of his physical environment, utilizing its myriad forces and laws for the accomplishment of his purposes. In literature, music and other imaginative arts he is ever creating for himself new forms of refined gratification, objects which do not perish with the using, but are augmented and deepened, rather, in their emotional power, as the experience of them is shared and repeated.<sup>1</sup> Through the inheritance of customs, laws and institutions a permanent social order becomes established, subject, indeed, to modifications and improvements, but providing all the while for an increasing security and stability of social life. And religion,

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the capacity for repetition as a mark of aesthetic experience, see Marshall, *Aesthetic Principles*.

increasingly purified of unreason and fear, unites in its ineffable unity, like a seamless robe, our varied intellectual, artistic and moral interests and strivings.

The causes  
of misery  
largely  
remediable.

The desirability of man's life is increased not merely by rendering it more felicitous, but also by removing from it the various sources of misery. It will be helpful, therefore, for our valuation of life if we at this point enumerate the main sources of human misery, and note what progress, if any, humanity has made in their elimination.

The three leading sources of human misery are indigence, disease and death. It is very important for our estimation of the value of life to remember that two of them are largely amenable to human control. To quote the words of John Stuart Mill: "Poverty, in any sense implying suffering, may be completely extinguished by the wisdom of society, combined with the good sense and providence of individuals. Even that most intractable of enemies, disease, may be indefinitely reduced in dimensions by good physical and moral education, and proper control of noxious influences; while the progress of science holds

out a promise for the future of still more direct conquests over this detestable foe. . . . As for the vicissitudes of fortune and other disappointments connected with worldly circumstances, these are principally the effect either of gross imprudence, of ill-regulated desires, or of bad or imperfect social institutions. All the great sources, in short, of human suffering are in a great degree, many of them almost entirely, conquerable by human care and effort.”<sup>1</sup> Much progress has indeed been made since Mill’s time in the artificial elimination of the suffering which accompanies extreme poverty and disease. I have in mind here of course the development of a large number of financial and social organizations which encourage the accumulation of savings, and provide for the care of the hopelessly indigent and helpless. The practical elimination of extreme physical pain by the use of anaesthetics is of course one of the most signal services which the science of medicine has rendered the cause of human progress.

<sup>1</sup> Utilitarianism, Routledge edition, p. 28. For the progress in the elimination of poverty, which is sometimes thought to be increasing in extent and depth, see Carroll D. Wright, *Some Ethical Phases of the Labor Question*, and Eden, *The State of the Poor*.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

Activity  
and hap-  
piness.

There are certain other sources of human happiness, all of them intrinsically accessible, which belong in a peculiar way to human life, and which we must notice somewhat carefully. One of these is work, the active use of man's powers and capacities in the struggle of existence, and in contending with the various obstacles which lie in the path of his purposes. It is one of the contradictions of existence that the very thing which often seems to impede life makes life possible and adds to its value, much as friction impedes motion, but is, at the same time, an indispensable condition of motion. "The world is," some one has said, "what for an active being it must be, full of hindrances."<sup>1</sup> Man lives, says Goethe, as long as he strives.

The view that happiness is the result of noble action is perhaps the profoundest and most valuable lesson which Greek ethics has to teach us. And the lesson needs ever to be learned anew. Throughout all ages man has sought happiness in ways in which it was not to be found. One of the most common of these chimeras is the very opposite of activity,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, p. 350.



namely leisure, and wealth, the supposed means of leisure. The Greek conception of the comparative value of wealth, on the one hand, and a life of noble activity, on the other, is illustrated in the well-known story of the meeting of Croesus and Solon, as told by Herodotus. "After showing Solon through his treasury, Croesus addressed the Athenian sage as follows: 'O stranger from Athens, we have heard much of your wisdom and travels, we have been told that you have visited many countries in the pursuit of philosophy, for the sake of study. Now, I should like to know whether you have ever seen a man whom you regard as the happiest of all?' But he asked him, expecting that Solon would call him, the king, the happiest of all men. Solon, however, did not wish to flatter him, but spoke the truth: 'O king, the Athenian Tellos.' The king was surprised and asked: 'Why do you esteem Tellos happier than all others?' Solon answered: 'Tellos lived at a time when the city was prosperous; he had beautiful and good children, and, above all, lived to see his grandchildren, and all of them were preserved to him; he was, for our conditions, in good

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

circumstances, and finally he suffered a glorious death. At Eleusis, in a battle between the Athenians and their neighbors, he succeeded in repelling the enemy after a gallant fight, and met a most beautiful death. And the Athenians buried him where he fell, at public expense, and greatly honored him.'"<sup>1</sup>

The profound insight of the Greeks that happiness comes, not from possessions, but from a life of noble activity, is one which Browning uses with splendid effect in various of his poems, notably in the brilliant piece, *Pheidippides*. *Pheidippides* is a Greek runner commissioned to take the news of victory from Marathon to Athens. Day and night he runs, over mountain, through valley, across stubble and field, with the smooth swiftness of fire. Having delivered his message of victory, he falls dead in his tracks:

“Like wine through clay,  
Joy in his blood bursting his heart,  
He died—the bliss!”

Death here is no tragic event, because it is the consummation of a life which in a deed, wrought singly and in solitude, had reached a

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Paulsen, *System of Ethics*, pp. 37-38.

## OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

---

swift and fitting climax. Better to die than to suffer decline:

“So is Pheidippides happy forever,—the noble strong  
man

Who could race like a god:

He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was  
suffered to tell

Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he  
began,

So to end gloriously—once to shout, thereafter be mute:  
‘Athens is saved!’”

Perhaps neither of our illustrations is after all very well suited to our purpose, because they both tend to center attention somewhat unduly upon the exceptional event, the battle, the brilliant race, and to draw it away from the normal exercise of life. While such exceptional deeds doubtless add excitement and distinction to life, still, they are not at all indispensable to it. Fortunately, it is not the unusual and highly flavored experiences of life upon which we depend for happiness; the most common and chronically recurring are quite as capable of yielding it. Perhaps it is the latter upon which, as upon the bread and meat of our daily diet, we mainly depend for the most enduring satisfactions. Mr. Lecky

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

reports a passage in Lord Althorp's life in which "that most popular and successful statesman, towards the close of his long parliamentary life, expressed his emphatic conviction that the thing which gave him the greatest pleasure in the world was to see sporting dogs hunt." He cites further the instance of a great writer who had devoted almost his entire life to the completion of a gigantic literary work, but who observed that amid the congratulations which poured in to him from every side he could not help feeling how tepid was the satisfaction which such a triumph could give him, and what much more vivid gratification he had come to take in hearing the approaching steps of some little children whom he had taught to love him.<sup>1</sup> It would be surprising to most persons to know (if such things could be accurately determined) what a large proportion of their happiness comes from such common and homely experiences as eating and drinking, common work and rest, home life, companionship, the recurring seasons, animals, the prattle of young children, and the like. The

<sup>1</sup> The Map of Life, pp. 22 and 23.

## OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

---

mercies of life are many, and they come upon us silently and gently, as the dew upon the garden. And it is the failure to exploit these common goods and enjoyments that fills so many lives with cynicism and discontent.

The con-  
tribution  
of insight.

Aside from the normal exercise of life, and the use of our powers, the other great sources of specifically human happiness are insight and love. The relation of knowledge to man's welfare is manifold. The primary and the most fundamental fact about knowledge is that it constitutes an effective equipment for the struggle for existence, the most effective, in fact, with which any animal has been provided. Knowledge has indeed other uses than this instrumental or biological one of helping man to adjust himself to his environment. But that it has this function is undeniable. In virtue of the possession of memory and reasoning, man can "look before and after," can deliberately turn the results of his past experience to account in meeting future situations, thus giving him an immense advantage over the lower creatures, which depend almost exclusively upon their perceptual and instinctive endowments to guide

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

them, an advantage roughly analogous to that possessed by the eye, which is sensitive to distant objects, over the sense of touch, which can feel only such objects as are already in immediate contact with the creature.

It is sometimes asserted that knowledge only adds a burden to man's life from which lower creatures are free, by enabling him to see the true nature of life. This view clearly begs the question by assuming that life is evil, which is precisely the point in question. If life is indeed an evil, then a knowledge of it would doubtless increase man's misery. On the other hand, if life is good, knowledge can only add to its value by enabling man to enjoy it in retrospect and in anticipation, as well as in his direct experience. That the perspective view that knowledge affords is not itself of definite significance for our problem is shown by the fact that, whereas many pleasures are diminished by the anticipation that "they cannot last," many misfortunes are also relieved by the anticipation of better days. Both experiences are so common that they have become a part of the proverbial wisdom of the race.

The philosophical optimist has of course emphasized that aspect of the question which most readily supported his logical or temperamental bias. It is in any case true that many apparent evils are full of beneficent meaning to a wider knowledge, which are opaque or sinister to uninformed desire. For the frustration of immediate impulse must always be felt as painful and evil. To a child a painful operation appears as an unmixed evil, even if it promises life-long health. So many apparent evils cease to be felt as such when they are fitted into the larger contexts and connections of life in which they properly belong. One has to see a certain length of a curved line before one can determine its mathematical properties. The insect creeping on the ground cannot have the same view of the landscape which is open to the eagle in the sky. That the limited range of a finite creature's experience may well give it entirely erroneous impressions of the true nature of its environments is well illustrated by Sir Oliver Lodge: "To an organism living only in the spring, the world would seem bursting with youth and hope, an era of rising sap and expectation;

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

to an organism living only in the autumn, over-maturity, decay and despair would be the dominant features. But to creatures whose life is long enough both phases are welcome, and are recognized as parts of a larger plan.”<sup>1</sup> It is essentially the prerogative of wisdom to take the distant view. In virtue of it, man can transcend the immediate data of his sense experience, learning something, at least, of the larger features of the universe in which his life is set. We cannot understand the details of so comparatively slight a production as a poem or any other work of human art if we lift these details out of their concrete connections, and insist upon understanding them in their bare isolation. And if the universe is not like a bad poem, containing irrelevancies and detached episodes, how can we hope to understand its details except as we try to view them in their connections with the structure and purpose of the whole to which they belong?

There is a further bearing which the possession of reason has upon happiness which is so important as to deserve explicit mention. The point relates to the control which reason

<sup>1</sup> The Hibbert Journal, January 1912, p. 296.



can gain over desire, curtailing or expanding it, so as to make man largely independent of the chances and changes of fortune. Let us call these two methods of controlling desire the methods of retraction and expansion. The first is the method of Stoic austerity, the second that of Christian generosity. The Stoic way consists in cutting off desire. "Make thy claim of wages a zero," says Carlyle, "then hast thou the world under thy feet." No one has discussed this subject more tellingly than the late Professor James. "If a man has given up those things which are subject to foreign fate, and ceased to regard them as parts of himself at all, we are wellnigh powerless over him. The Stoic's receipt for contentment was to dispossess yourself in advance of all that was out of your own power,—then fortune's shocks might rain down unfelt." The other way consists in the identification of others' interests and fortunes with one's own. "Such persons can feel a sort of delicate rapture in thinking that, however sick, ill-favored, mean-conditioned, and generally forsaken they may be, they yet are integral parts of the whole of

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

this brave world, have a fellow share in the strength of the dray horses, the happiness of the young people, the wisdom of the wise ones, and are not altogether without part or lot in the good fortunes of the Vanderbilts and the Hohenzollerns themselves. . . . He who, with Marcus Aurelius, can truly say, 'O Universe, I wish all that thou wishest,' has a self from which every trace of negativeness and obstructiveness has been removed—no wind can blow except to fill its sails."<sup>1</sup>

And of  
love.

Such world-encircling sympathy, however, is possible only to natures of very exceptional imaginative and sentimental power, and of great native unselfishness. With most of us affection is limited to a comparatively few persons, to father and mother, to lover and beloved, to wife and child, the greater restriction of affection being compensated for, however, by a correspondingly greater depth and strength. Such love is indeed one of the leading sources of mundane happiness which we are here seeking to enumerate. As in the case of beauty, the energy and worth of love are not diminished with the

<sup>1</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, 312.

## OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

---

spending, but only enriched and strengthened. It is an unfailing source of happiness even when all other objects which yield us happiness are gone. But when love is gone, life itself has largely lost its meaning and value. Somewhere in his essay on Utilitarianism, from which I have already quoted, Mill has the following: "When people who are tolerably fortunate in their outward lot do not find in life sufficient enjoyment to make it valuable for them, the cause is generally caring for nobody but themselves." We can go further. There is no gift like love for the person whose outward circumstances are such as not to afford him much happiness. And love is the one thing of which no man need be deprived: for it is the only thing in the world whose existence is contingent on nothing except itself. No soil is too unfriendly to nourish its growth, if only it finds itself again in the response of another. In truth, it often thrives most luxuriantly where it is obliged to live a precarious outward existence:

"Like a chance-sown plant  
Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds  
And softer stains, unknown in happier climes."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *Paracelsus*, V.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

It outlasts misfortune, it is deepened by pain, it is stronger even than death.

It is true that in a sense the end of all love is loss, and the loss of the objects of affection through death is perhaps the most poignant of human sorrows. Still, the life visited by love and loss is better than the life that has never known either. Moreover, love does not cease when the object of it has been removed. Whether it still finds its object "in some realms of help," behind this visible scene, or whether it nourishes itself on the impalpable memory of a soul that has yielded up its existence, it remains as a solace and a fragrance, to ennoble and adorn the life in which it has found a home.

Our conclusions on the problem of the value of life have so far strongly favored optimism. There is, however, one further consideration to which we have not given very full attention, and to which we must briefly turn in conclusion.

### IV

Is there  
moral prog-  
ress?

It is often said that while there are doubtless many evidences of progress in the world, this progress is mainly

outward progress. The only kind of progress, however, worthy of being considered, it is said, is moral progress. Are men growing better as well as wiser, wealthier and more comfortable? This is indeed a pertinent question the importance of which we can hardly overrate, and which we must seek in some way to answer. Here, as before, in discussing the general problem of progress, there are two classes of facts which we can introduce to throw light on the problem. We can either refer to our direct experience, or we can resort to certain general lines of argument of a scientific kind which may help us to reach some reasonable conclusion. Let us follow these two methods in the order mentioned.

It can of course be no task of the present book to give anything like an adequate account of the history of morality with a view to seeing what progress, if any, has actually taken place in the moral ideals and practices of mankind throughout its long history. This is a theme which would require a number of volumes for its adequate treatment. Fortunately, such books are available to-

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

day,<sup>1</sup> and it needs only a cursory glance at one of them to convince even the most pessimistic that the progress in the moralization and the socialization of man, while often discouragingly tedious, has been, on the whole, steady and cumulative. Some conception of the progress in morality today can be gained by simply reviewing in one's mind the astounding development in moral sentiment and practice which has taken place over the world within the memory, even, of the present generation. I have in mind the unexampled improvement and multiplication of educational agencies of every kind and grade, providing for the enlightenment and training of constantly increasing numbers of people; the growing humanity shown to children, to prisoners, to defectives, and to other weak and defenceless members of society; the extension of missionary activities, intended to carry higher forms of civilization into every part of the world; the rapid

<sup>1</sup> The most important one book on the history of morality in the English language is perhaps Westermarck's monumental work, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, a book which has superseded many of the older books on the subject, and which no student of ethics or anthropology can afford to be without.

growth of eleemosynary institutions, providing for the care and comfort of the aged, the homeless and helpless; laws requiring sanitation, the protection of public safety, the isolation of contagious diseases, and forbidding the sale of intoxicants, adulterated foods and drugs; the spread of public sentiment in favor of disarmament, and arbitration; the extension of political suffrage; the growing sympathy for labor and the common man; the abolition of slavery and serfdom, etc. All these phenomena are unmistakable evidences, I take it, of the growth of social righteousness, and the spirit of human brotherhood. It is true that one's temperamental bias, and one's eagerness for progress, is likely to make one overestimate somewhat the progress of social righteousness which is taking place. There are doubtless many cross-currents and backward eddies in the great stream of progress. But one is obliged to believe, on the basis of purely historical and statistical evidence, that the main tendency is forward and upward toward a higher justice and a larger social good.

This belief is strongly supported by what

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

we know of the laws governing moral progress. This is a subject of extreme interest, and of the utmost importance, but we can again merely touch upon it here. It is modern utilitarian and evolutionary ethics, strange as this may seem to those who have viewed these types with suspicion, as making for a hard and materialistic view of life, that have made the most substantial contributions to the theory of moral optimism. Even a slight attention to modern evolutionary ethics will reveal the fact that progress is the law of life in the realm of morality, as it is in other realms. We spoke above of a process of natural selection in nature tending to favor those individuals that happen to possess traits, like strength, fleetness, protective covering, sensory alertness, etc., which are calculated to aid them in the struggle for existence in a more or less unfriendly environment. There is a similar process of selection going on in the moral realm, tending to preserve, not individuals, as awhile ago, but types of moral actions and of moral ideals which have exceptional vitality and "survival value." Moral actions and ideals which prove to have less value and



## OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

---

vitality of course perish in the competitive struggle, like the less-favored individuals in the plant and animal world. This view has been brilliantly worked out by a number of recent ethicists, notably Leslie Stephen and Sutherland Alexander, whose works are among the most suggestive and interesting in the whole literature of modern ethics.<sup>1</sup>

Without following these writers through the details of their reasonings here, we may simply suggest a few very elementary considerations which will make perfectly plain, I hope, the process of preferential selection referred to. What, for example, do we mean by a good action? I think we mean, in general, an action which has individual and social utility, one which tends to promote the general welfare. And what do we mean by a bad action? We mean an action which lacks such utility, or one which tends to destroy social welfare. Now society, like the indi-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stephen, *The Science of Ethics*, and Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*. See also Spencer, *Principles of Ethics*, and the able work of Professor Sorley, *The Ethics of Naturalism*. The ethical writings of Sidgwick, James Seth, Paulsen, Simmel, Mezes, Mackenzie, Dewey and Tufts, and Muirhead are also valuable either for discussion or criticism.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

vidual, is extremely sensitive to anything affecting its welfare, and it reacts in distinct and characteristic ways upon individuals who seek to promote that welfare, or are engaged in destroying it, favoring the former and punishing the latter. By a never-ceasing process of expulsion and assimilation (we call the latter reclamation or reform) society, by a life impulse which we find in nature everywhere, is constantly seeking to maintain a certain minimum of health and vitality, much as our physical organism automatically seeks to assimilate or else expel a poison which has been taken into it, and otherwise to remedy its weaknesses. And as crime comes to be viewed more and more in the light of a disease of the social tissue, which must inevitably lower social vitality, society will become more skilled in its diagnosis and cure, and eventually, one hopes, in its prevention; for here, even more than in the case of physical disorders, prevention is better than cure.

The bearing of this upon the subject of the survival of good in the universe is obvious. It is impossible for evil to exist except as a temporary form of reality. The criminal,

## OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

---

for example, always leads a precarious existence in society. He may through deception succeed in carrying through his purposes, and he may, by constant vigilance, avoid the consequences for a time after his true character has become known. But he is ever "a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth," with the curse of Cain as his portion, and unless he gives evidence of reform he may even come to a violent end at the hands of society which he has sought to hurt. The good man, on the other hand, is constantly favored by those whom he has in any way benefited by his life. In a living organism like society, of course, whose internal adjustment, while constantly going on, is never complete, it is quite possible that the good man should for a time suffer, as the criminal may for a time prosper. But this can occur only as the exception, never as the rule. The law of the moral universe is that the righteous shall flourish and the wicked come to naught, and this law is as inevitable as any law of nature. Goodness, in other words, is not an adventitious element in the universe, decreed and enforced by some external lawgiver, as an older view often pre-

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

sented it; it is always being produced and supported by an automatic and self-regulating process such as has been in rough outline described, a process which no man can stay or hinder, which society as a whole, even, cannot alter or reverse, except at the peril of its own life. It is the soul of the world that is good, as Plato long ago taught, and goodness is the deepest reality in the universe. This was the united thought of Greek philosophy and of Hebrew wisdom. It has also been the sublime faith of all the higher religions throughout the ages.<sup>1</sup>

### LITERATURE

Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*.

Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*.

Mackenzie, *A Manual of Ethics*, Chapter VII, § 8.

Paulsen, *A System of Ethics*, Book II, Chapter III.

Schiller, *Riddles of the Sphinx*, Book III.

Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Volume I, Book IV.

Spencer, *Data of Ethics*.

Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, Lectures XV–XVII.

Wenley, *Aspects of Pessimism*.

<sup>1</sup>The memory of a good man, even after he is dead, will remain fresh in the mind of posterity. "Leo Nickolaivitch, the memory of your goodness will never fade from the minds of us orphaned peasants," was the inscription on the white banners borne by a great host of Russian peasants at the burial of the late Leo Tolstoi.

VI

THE SHADOW OF DEATH



## VI

### THE SHADOW OF DEATH

If life  
is good,  
death must  
be an evil.

It is an interesting commentary upon the problem of the value of life that its termination in death should be regarded as the greatest of evils. Indeed, it is often assumed that the only condition under which life can be worth living is that man somehow survives the crisis of death, and continues his earthly life in some future form of existence similar to the present. I wish in this section to maintain four propositions, all of which must, I think, commend themselves the moment they are clearly apprehended. They are (1) that the mere assurance of a future life is unimportant; (2) the usual arguments against the possibility of a future life are not coercive; (3) that, on the other hand, no really coercive arguments exist to prove a future life; and (4) that the failure to prove the existence of a future life does not render our present life valueless. Let us take these points up in their order.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

The mere assurance of a future life is unimportant.

(1) The mere knowledge that our life continues beyond death has not the slightest bearing upon the question of life's value, and cannot be used either in the interest of a theistic or a non-theistic view of the world, unless the nature of future life can somehow be determined. Much misdirection of learning has resulted from a failure to make this simple point clear. The reason, of course, why the question of immortality has been considered of such decisive importance for the evaluation of life is that future life has been assumed to be one of great felicity or else of great unhappiness. Unless we can be assured of this, however, we do not get the least light either for the problem of the goodness of life or the goodness of the universe. The case is very similar to the case of the belief in the existence of God, a belief which has often been regarded as very essential to a religious view of the world. Here, too, the mere knowledge of God's existence is absolutely without significance for a theory of life unless we also know something of the nature of God. It would evidently be of little use for a theistic view of the world to believe that



## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

---

God existed, but that he was powerless or malicious. The insignificance of merely existential judgments of this kind has been so much emphasized in recent philosophical literature that there is no need to dwell upon the matter further here.

Still, future life, if it exists, must be either prevailingly happy or unhappy, and it may be possible in some degree to anticipate which it will be. And in so far as we can do so, the general question of the possibility of future life becomes interesting and important.

The arguments against immortality are not conclusive.

(2) Let us then center our attention briefly upon the question of this possibility. It will be well to go straight to the most formidable difficulty which any doctrine of immortality encounters. This difficulty arises in connection with the fundamental hypothesis of modern physiological psychology that conscious life depends upon the brain. "No psychosis without a neurosis," no mental process without a corresponding nervous process, has become a sort of universal shibboleth in psychological discussions, and has been supported by so many anatomical and pathological facts, as well as

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

by observations from common experience, that it has acquired an almost axiomatic value. Now, assuming this formula to express the ultimate truth as to the connection between mind and brain, and assuming the brain to be destroyed at death, as it doubtless is, what becomes of the conscious life of which it was the indispensable condition? Or let us take another case. A continuous personal life is impossible without memory. A creature, for example, which did not have a memory of sufficient strength to carry over its experiences from one day to another would not live one continuous life, but many brief lives, as many lives as days. Its life would be a rope of sand; or, to use a less drastic figure, and one which would convey a truer impression of the facts, its life would be like the links of a chain which had been disconnected from one another. Similarly, if death should mean an interruption of personal life through the complete loss of memory, then future life, even if it existed, would be valueless to us, because it would be completely cut off from the present life. But it is the present life that men wish to have continued when they

## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

---

desire immortality. Now let us again suppose that the brain furnishes the indispensable conditions for memory, as it is said to furnish the conditions for all other mental experiences. Let us suppose, with recent psychology, that the retention of past experience is "no mysterious storing up of an idea in an unconscious state. It is not a fact of the mental order at all. It is a purely physiological phenomenon, a morphological feature, the presence of . . . paths, namely, in the finest recesses of the brain's tissue."<sup>1</sup> The conclusion is so obvious and natural as to make its formal statement superfluous.

The only way this difficulty can be dealt with is by striking directly at its root, and denying the kind of connection between the brain and the mind which is asserted by the complete dependence theory. Such a denial has often been made in the history of philosophy, and, quite recently, by the very man who has perhaps done more than any other writer in the English-speaking world for the progress of physiological psychology, and for the domestication of the very principle which

<sup>1</sup> James, *Psychology*, Briefer Course, pp. 291-292.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

has wrought such havoc with our traditional theories of immortality, the late William James. I shall simply restate his distinctions here, and let them carry whatever weight they will. In his little book called *Human Immortality* he distinguishes between the productive function and the transmissive function of the brain. It is possible that the brain does not produce thought, as heated water produces steam, but that it merely transmits it, as glass, for example, transmits light, or a metal rod transmits heat. The glass or the rod do not produce light or heat, they merely serve as their conductors or transmitters. This hypothesis is not contradicted by the well-known pathological facts that structural or functional disturbances of the brain disturb the course of thought. This is to be expected on the transmission theory as well as on the older theory of production. A window pane which is wrinkled or dust-covered cannot transmit light so perfectly as one of plate glass and perfectly free from dust.

The objection might be made here that the illustration neglects one very important point which, if it were clearly brought out, would

show the futility of the whole argument. The glass would be proved to be the productive cause of light if, when the window were broken, the tenant would be left in complete darkness. But the suggestion made here, namely that the soul lapses into unconsciousness with the destruction of the brain, is precisely the point at issue, a point which, in the nature of the case, cannot be decided one way or the other. The materialist might be right. On the other hand, it might be as hazardous to maintain that there could be no consciousness if there were no brain as it would be for a man to infer that if he walked out of the house he could not see the sky, because there was no longer any glass through which he could see it.<sup>1</sup>

The transmission theory, it might be worth while to add, would have a distinct advantage over its rival in the respect that it would avoid the difficulty of assuming the creation and destruction of consciousness with the appearance and disappearance of each brain. Science is never very friendly to creation theories, and it might be more

<sup>1</sup> I owe this clever illustration to Mr. McTaggart. See *op. cit.*, p. 105.

convenient to assume that consciousness, like light, heat, etc., exists once and for all, and, like these other energies, appears only at such points in the physical order as it finds pervious to the particular form of energy which it represents.

But neither  
can we  
prove im-  
mortality.

(3) If the arguments against immortality are unconvincing, the arguments for the belief are at least equally so. Empirical evidence in the form of telepathic communications from disembodied spirits is indeed possible, and if undisputed evidence of this kind were forthcoming the supporters of the belief in a future life would have a decided advantage over those who oppose it; for, as Mr. Schiller wittily remarks, while the ghost of Lord Lyttelton might admonish his friend that his doubts in the future were unfounded, no ghost could return and convince us that future life was an illusion. The evidential value of the alleged communications is so extremely uncertain, however, that the temptation is strong to deny that any phenomena of the kind ever occurred which cannot be explained on more familiar hypotheses than that of the existence

of disembodied spirits who are able to enter into communication with living men.<sup>1</sup>

The argu-  
ment from  
desire.

Of the other arguments usually relied upon to prove a future life the two most common are the argument from men's desires, and the moral argument that a future is needed in which goodness and happiness may be made to coincide, and reward be adjusted more perfectly to desert than it is in the present world. Let us take up these points in their order.

Nature provides means, it is often said, for the satisfaction of the various wants of human nature: for hunger there is food; for thirst, drink; for the need of companionship, society, etc. But, on the other side, there are many desires, some of them both legitimate and insistent, which remain permanently unsatisfied. It is the amazing amount of cruelty and loss which runs through nature like a crimson thread that gives permanent ground for the strain of pessimism which ever and anon disturbs our life with its plaintive tone of accusation and malcontent.

<sup>1</sup> For an interesting and sympathetic discussion of the subject of spiritualism, see James, *The Will to Believe*; for a hostile criticism, Jastrow, *Fact and Fable in Psychology*.

And from  
the in-  
justice of life.

As regards the second argument, associated with no less a name than Kant's, that a future life is necessary in order that justice may be realized, we have not the slightest inkling as to how such a process would occur. The only theory of historical importance so far proposed, that of the heaven and hell of traditional theology, is so extravagant and sensational in character as to make it wholly useless for our purposes. A moment's thought would show that the ends of justice cannot be served by such fearful alternatives. For while no man's life has been actually meritorious enough to be rewarded through all eternity, it is still more evident to anyone with ordinary insight and charity that no man, no matter how wicked, has deserved punishment so frightful and diabolical as traditional religion has often represented it to be. The only motives for punishment are three: that of revenge, that of reclamation of the criminal, and that of the protection of society. The first motive has been all but abandoned today as being repugnant to modern ideas of justice. The possibility of the reclamation of the sinner is usually



excluded in the theory of eternal punishment. Nor would the maintenance of a punitive institution of such terrors as hell is pictured to be appear warranted by its effects in deterring men from crime. There is every reason for believing, as Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson suggests,<sup>1</sup> that the immediate penalties of nature and of human law are vastly more effective than the mere idea of a distant event, no matter how august and dreadful, the evidence for which can never pass beyond the stage of hearsay. Certainly, it would be a highly wasteful and arbitrary method of administering justice to subject untold numbers of spirits to cruel suffering for the feeble and chance effects which such suffering might have upon a race of men too much bent upon their immediate pursuits to be influenced materially by a contingency so remote and problematical. Fortunately, nature is not constructed along the lines of an outworn religious eschatology. If it were, the future evils of an imaginary place of torment would soon become present evils so deep and dark as to make life unbearable.

<sup>1</sup> In his interesting little book, *Is Immortality Desirable?*

The only other methods of securing the adjustment of merit and happiness, aside from those suggested by a religious symbolism, are the methods of gradual approximation through the sufferings and rewards entailed by the intrinsic nature of human actions. This process, as we saw in the previous section, is constantly going on, and will continue to go on so long as society itself endures. Justice, like everything else in this universe, will not be ushered in catastrophically, without human participation or effort; it will come, if at all, through the tedious but certain process of evolution, speeded by the help of man. *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht.* And this is not a depressing view; it is a bracing and inspiring one. With no responsibility and no task, a noble and active mind would feel slighted and oppressed. In the face of great issues and alternatives man rallies his energies as at a promise or a threat. He is stimulated to his best thoughts and efforts when he can feel that these are really needed in the great work of the world.

The truth is that our knowledge of future life, if it exists, is so defective as to make it

unsafe to venture an opinion as to how justice will there be realized, except by reasoning from such data as are given in our present experience. The complete absence of knowledge, either positive or negative, of a future life indeed explains the elaborate theological theories which have grown up concerning it in the history of humanity. The only limitations to belief, as Professor Stout has so finely described,<sup>1</sup> are the checks it receives from experience, and from other beliefs which enjoy social sanction. In the absence of empirical checks, beliefs, especially if they are as stimulating and picturesque as men's beliefs in the future, will grow up like mushrooms, and multiply with an astounding rapidity. Their spontaneous character and their flimsy construction, however, must be perfectly evident to anyone at all accustomed to the main results of modern psychology and anthropology.

Ignorance concerning the future not an evil.

Nor is the existence of ignorance concerning the future a cause for complaint or unhappiness. Certitude, we know, often means sloth, and a reasonable amount of intellectual uncertainty is

<sup>1</sup> In his *Manual of Psychology*.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

unquestionably necessary for the zest and watchfulness which life so much needs:

“Just so much of doubt  
As bade me plant a surer foot upon  
The sun-road, . . . . . set my heart  
Trembling so much as warned me I stood there  
On sufferance.”<sup>1</sup>

Powers subjected to no strain, as has often been observed, atrophy and eventually disappear. With complete certainty, either of our fortunes or our fate, might come a flagging of interest and a relaxing of energies which would simulate closely the “sleep and the forgetting” of which we stand so much in dread.

If immortal-  
ity is not  
true, life  
does not  
lose its  
value.

(4) The assertion that life is not worth living unless we can have the assurance of immortality must, upon reflection, be regarded as hasty and unreasonable. To anyone who claims eternal happiness as a right we might well reply in the blustering rhetoric of Carlyle: “I tell thee, blockhead, it all comes of thy vanity; of what thou fanciest those same deserts of thine to be. Fancy that thou deservest to be hanged (as is most likely), thou wilt feel it happiness to be

<sup>1</sup> Browning, Paracelsus.

## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

---

only shot; fancy that thou deservest to be hanged in a hair halter, it will be luxury to die in hemp. . . . What act of legislature was there that *thou* shouldst be happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to *be* at all.”<sup>1</sup>

The contention that a future life is necessary in order that we may be able to give an ethical interpretation to the universe would have weight only in the event of the complete failure of the present life. But that the present life is not such a failure is the thesis which the whole of the previous section was meant to support. And if life were a failure, we should still have to show that a future existence would promise a great improvement over the present one. But this we could not do, for the only data which philosophy has to work with, those of present experience, would by hypothesis be worthless for such an undertaking. If the part of the world which we know is rational and just, then the parts unknown to us may be inferred to be so too. But if the part we know is unjust, I do not see what grounds we have for believ-

<sup>1</sup> Sartor Resartus, The Everlasting Yea.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

ing that the remainder is more promising. Here, as everywhere, we must keep our feet on the solid ground of experience at the risk of harboring fables and illusions. To the philosopher, as Paulsen somewhere wittily says, all paths to truth are open, only not the path through the air.

And the  
effects of  
life are  
not lost.

One very common error in connection with death is that we are prone to over-estimate the actual amount of genuine loss which death entails. Have we not already lived and can anything which *has been* ever cease to be? The minute researches of sciences have tended to show that not a particle of the matter and energy in the universe is ever lost. Then shall spiritual energy, the things for which we have worked, and the ideals for which we have truly striven, come to nothing? We may answer in the words of Rabbi Ben Ezra:

“Fool! All that is, at all,  
Lasts ever, past recall;  
What entered into thee,  
That was, is, and shall be.”

Whatever may be said of the continuance of our individual identity, it is certain that our

## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

---

physical and mental traits largely reappear in our posterity. And the products of our minds and our hands, souvenirs, as it were, of our spiritual life, may long survive our individual extinction. But how long will they survive? As long as they deserve to. As everywhere else, nature here will not destroy that which by its constitution and inner vitality is fitted to survive, just as society does not destroy what it finds suited to its needs. What remains, then, is after all those lives and those parts of lives which we should desire to have remain. It is clear that some men's desire for immortality cannot be realized in a righteous universe, these desires often being for the continuance of the immediate and more or less private and even selfish interests which characterize them. The necessity of death, it will appear here, is simply due to the fact that man is but a small part of an immensely vaster scheme of things, whose interests and purposes he does not, even at his best, ever completely represent. His death, then, in so far as he suffers death, is due to his finitude, his imperfection. As thus finite and imperfect, he must succumb to the greater power and

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

the higher good. And to such subordination of the lesser to the greater, the worse to the better, no one can rightly object. The life which is but an empty shell, into which no thought of good has ever entered, ought to perish, the sooner the better. As Goethe finely says:

“Wer keinen Namen sich erwarb, noch Edles will,  
Gehört den Elementen an: so fahret hin!  
Verdienst und Treue wahrt uns die Natur.”

On the other hand, a true life, if it is sincerely and gracefully lived, cannot be wasted. And this remains true whether we regard death as truly fatal, or whether we view it as merely the opening of a fresh phase of a never-ending existence. Do we consider rare cloud effects as worthless features of the world because we know them to be evanescent? Or do we regard an exquisite melody as wasted because its fragile loveliness does not survive the fleeting moment? Is it a loss that a flower should have blossomed even if its beauty and fragrance disappear with the passing of spring? The value of many things in fact depends almost entirely upon their transient and uncertain existence. A world bereft of sunsets,



## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

---

music and flowers would have lost much of its loveliness and interest; but what a world would be in which these had become permanent and constant features it is somewhat startling to contemplate. We have after all not passed far beyond the attitude of peevish children who refuse to come in at nightfall after they have played outdoors all day. It seems much like ingratitude and blasphemy to condemn the present life because we cannot live always, especially since it contains so much, after all, which is great and good.

“Is it so small a thing  
To have enjoyed the sun,  
To have lived light in the spring,  
To have loved, to have thought, to have done,  
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling  
foes?”<sup>1</sup>

But prema-  
ture death is  
sad.

It would, of course, be the merest affectation to deny that premature death, whatever may be said about death after the work of life has been fairly accomplished, must, under any view, appear unjust and wasteful. Such death comes as the end of our enthusiasms, the violent interrupter of all our plans and hopes. And this

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Empedocles on Aetna*.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

is both unfortunate and sad. As Browning says in *Paracelsus*, that noble work of his youth, which contains so much that is fine and wonderful:

“How very full  
Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar service,  
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,  
When glory dawns and all is at the best,  
The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint  
And die for want of a wood-piler's help!  
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul  
Is pulled down in the overthrow.”

Fortunately for human happiness, the desires of life, and its zest, fail with the failure of our powers and the loss of usefulness. And if the individual has lived his life out, and contributed what he could to the world, he ought to be ready to yield up his being without murmur or complaint, and even with thankfulness for whatever good things life may have brought him. This spirit of graceful resignation is finely expressed by Walter Savage Landor in the epitaph written for himself:

“I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;  
Nature I loved and next to nature, art;  
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;  
It sinks and I am ready to depart.”

## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

---

The conditions of possible survival of mind.

There will always be men, it is true, who will feel a future existence in the form of their posterity and their influence and works to be empty and unattractive. Whether this feeling is due to a lack of imagination or to selfishness or to both, it doubtless has to be reckoned with. And it cannot be denied that a life which is able to witness the realization of its interests is vastly more valuable from a human point of view than a life which is shut up to the enjoyment of the mere prospect of such realization. This is the element of truth in the assertion one often hears that immortality, in order to be worth having, must be personal. It may be well, therefore, in conclusion, to state briefly the basis on which a belief in such survival must rest.

We sought, in an earlier part of this book,<sup>1</sup> to maintain the proposition that matter, and the whole physical scheme of things, have no ultimate and independent existence, no existence, that is, apart from minds which experience them. Nothing in the universe exists, we said, except minds and their experiences.

<sup>1</sup> In Section III.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

Whether this radical thesis of idealism be accepted or not, it is probably certain that there would be no such thing as *value* in the world apart from sentient appreciation or desire. The most serious thing that could happen to the universe, therefore, would be that the conscious selves in it should disappear. Then all its values, whether they were the values of the ordinary goods of life, which satisfy our common desires, or the higher values of truth, beauty and goodness, would be destroyed and all things alike be reduced to a colorless and indistinguishable mediocrity. The visible scene of this world, so complex in its inner structure, and so vast in its ultimate reaches, would, in respect to its value and significance, be of no more interest than a monstrous heap of dust and ashes. And all the works of man, precious treasures of an immemorial past, meant to be only the small beginnings of a still wealthier store, would fall in irretrievable ruin. It is difficult to believe that such disaster could overtake us *in a universe which has been so far friendly to our interests*. For minds *do* exist in the universe, and prosper in it. And if mind has

## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

---

anything like the strategic place in the world which we have claimed for it, it is inconceivable that it should be annihilated so long as the fundamental structure of the world remains what it is. Still, such an accident might occur, and there seems ultimately no reason which we can give why it could not except the one which Tennyson suggests in his incomparable threnody, the fundamental justice of things. "Thou has made him, Thou art just."<sup>1</sup>

And of the  
individual  
mind.

But, it may be objected here, we have so far vindicated only the survival of mind as such; *some* minds, or God's mind. But what each man is after all passionately interested in is the continuance of his individual mind. That this is true cannot be denied. The piteous cry of a soul contemplating the annihilation of its identity has never been uttered with a more heart-rending power than by Browning:

"God! Thou art mind! Unto the master mind  
Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!  
All else I will endure; if, as I stand  
Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,

<sup>1</sup> I owe this reference to a friend whom I had asked to give me a reason, no matter how bad, for believing in immortality. She replied in the lines of In Memoriam:

"He thinks he was not made to die,  
And thou hast made him, thou art just."

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

I bow me; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will;  
I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die;  
And if no trace of my career remain  
Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind  
In these bright chambers level with the air,  
See thou to it! But if my spirit fail,  
My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,  
Hast thou done well by me? So do not thou!  
Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed!"

Under what conditions, if any, will the individual self likely survive? The answer to this momentous question has already been partly suggested in another connection. The only condition under which life as we know it on earth survives is that it be adjusted to the environment in which it exists. We need not raise the old question here whether the individual must adjust himself *to* his environment, or whether he can adjust the environment to himself, or whether both processes may take place.<sup>1</sup> The adjustment must, in any case occur. This gives us an interesting clue to the answer to the question of the immortality of the individual soul. It will survive provided it stands in harmonious relations with what is deepest and

<sup>1</sup>I have discussed this question at some length in my book, *The Culture of Religion*, Section I.

## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

---

most normative in the universe. Even if a self which does not stand in such harmonious relations should survive, its survival could bring it no happiness, but only continuous disappointment and loss, a disappointment and loss directly in proportion to its persistence in a losing conflict. This is the element of truth in the traditional dogma of eternal punishment which has given it such vitality through all the passing years. The conditions of immortality, then, are at once simple and difficult. The two things which seem to be requisite are a knowledge of the true structure and purpose underlying the universe in which our lot is cast, and an identification of our interests with those elements in it which are most lasting and significant. In the noble symbolism of Christian scripture, we must lay up treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

Immortality, it follows from this, may then be conditional and a matter of degree. Moreover, it is not something which is thrust upon us, whether we will or no. It is, as the Germans say, not a *Gabe*, but an *Aufgabe*, not a gift, but a task. As Professor A. E. Taylor

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

finely says: "A future existence is not a heritage into which we are safe to step when the times comes, but a conquest to be won by the strenuous devotion of life to the acquisition of a rich, and at the same time orderly and harmonious, moral selfhood. And thus the belief in a future life, in so far as it acts in any given case as a spur to such strenuous living, might be itself a factor in bringing about its own fulfilment."<sup>1</sup> The situation, it will be seen, is such as to call out one's best knowledge and powers. And the prospect, though not entirely free from shadows, is to me, I confess, both interesting and grand.

### LITERATURE

- Dickinson, *Is Immortality Desirable?*  
Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, Book III.  
Fiske, *The Destiny of Man; Life Everlasting*.  
Fraser, *Philosophy of Theism*, Part III, Lecture V.  
James, *Human Immortality*.  
Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, Book IV.  
McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, Chapter III.  
Myers, *Science and a Future Life*.  
Ostwald, *Individuality and Immortality*.  
Royce, *The Conception of Immortality*.  
Santayana, *The Life of Reason, Reason in Religion*,  
Chapters XIII–XIV.  
Schiller, *Humanism*, Chapters XIII–XV.  
Seth, *Ethical Principles*, Part III, Chapter III.

<sup>1</sup> *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 358.



VII  
RELIGION AND MORALITY



## VII

### RELIGION AND MORALITY

The nature  
of the  
issue.

The subject which I wish to discuss briefly in this section is the much debated one of the nature and extent of the influence of religion upon the ideas and standards of morality. The question interests us in connection with one of the central problems of our discussion, the problem of progress. One of the most important kinds of progress, we saw, is moral progress. To anyone, therefore, who is seeking to estimate the place and validity of religion in modern life, the question of the relations of religion to morality becomes one of considerable importance.

Two rather distinct and incompatible views have been held by writers on the subject, the one holding that religion and morality are essentially and organically related, and that religion has tended to improve morality, the other, that the relation between the two is merely accidental, and that morality would be better off if separated from religious affilia-

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

tions. It is in this spirit that Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote: *Wahre Tugend ist unverträglich mit auf Autorität geglaubter Religion.* It is usually safe to assume that when two parties are so radically and invincibly divided on a topic as old as the present one some distinctions are in order. It will be well, therefore, to simplify the problem by definitely excluding a number of side issues which do not seem to have direct relevancy to the problem in hand.

(1) The question we are here to consider is not whether morality could exist without religion. It is very clear that it could. Moral laws and usages, as we had occasion to point out in another connection,<sup>1</sup> are indispensable conditions of human welfare, and a society which showed no bias or preference for types of actions tending to realize individual and social welfare could not long continue to exist. But all this is absolutely irrelevant to the question we are here seeking to determine, which is the influence of religion upon morality under the existing condition of their mutual relation and interpenetration. The

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Section V.

case is very similar to that of the influence of fine art upon morality. It is perfectly evident that morality could exist without the influence upon it of fine art. But whether it does so exist is of course improbable to the last degree. Religion and morality both have their roots in certain ideas, emotions and impulses of the mind. And all we know of the mind, of the fluid and processional character of its contents, and its more or less complete organization and integration, should make us suspect in advance any theory of the complete separation of the elements in question. Such a theory seems to rest upon an older departmental or faculty conception of the mind, with its water-tight compartments, a type which has long since been cast into the junk heap, along with other disused conceptions.

(2) Neither are we called upon to defend the view that the influence of religion upon morality has been uniform at various stages of their history, still less that the influence of religion upon moral standards and ideas has always been to elevate them. Anthropologists are pretty well agreed today that the

connection between the two elements has at certain stages in the development of society been a pretty loose one, and that their mutual influence has sometimes been practically negligible.<sup>1</sup> This was especially the case among primitive peoples whose gods were often non-moral and even immoral in character. The conduct prescribed by such religions is frequently ceremonial rather than ethical. Moral conduct is less important than the proper performance of rites, the recitation of formulas, and respect for the taboo. But this is a rather different question from that of the influence of religion upon morals when religion is taken in the large, or in its more modern and developed forms.

(3) It is also hardly germane to our problem to assert that there are many men of exemplary character whose conduct is in no wise influenced by religious considerations. One may well doubt whether many such men exist. It seems to me rather a psychological impossibility for any individual so completely

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for a discussion of this point the following: Fowler and Wilson, *The Principles of Morals*, p. 344; Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, p. 368; Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, and the literature cited at the end of this section.

to isolate himself from the community in which he grows up as not to be influenced, either consciously or unconsciously, by the ideas and usages which have all his life surrounded him. But I do not wish to discuss the matter further here.<sup>1</sup> The possible existence of such individuals is a purely academic question. Our more modest and more practical task is to determine the kind and the extent of the influence of religious ideas upon the character of men who actually hold them, that is, upon the majority of mankind.

(4) The general question of a possible beneficent effect of religion upon morality should not be unduly prejudiced by the fact that the modes of conduct prescribed by various religions have been various and often self-contradictory. They undoubtedly have. But so have the laws of various legislative bodies in the history of legislation often been inconsistent and contradictory. But no one would wish to infer from this that the influence of law has on the whole been detrimental to morality.

(5) Nor is the ethical influence of religion

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for a fair discussion of this point Pfleiderer, *Philosophy and Development of Religion*, Vol. I, p. 57 ff.

disproved by showing that immoral acts have been perpetrated in the name of religion. That they have is a well-authenticated fact. But it is not quite clear what conclusion one is expected to draw from that fact. It would surely be hazardous to conclude that it is the tendency of religion to produce criminals, or to make evil preponderate over goodness.

The only way in which religion could depress the general level of morality would be for it to advocate and seek to enforce immoral maxims and practices and to disseminate false views of the world and of life, or else to retard progress by opposing intellectual and ethical advance. That religion is guilty of both offences is a charge which one occasionally hears. And there is probably no doubt that misguided religionists have done much harm to the cause of progress by claiming religious sanctions for sundry irrational ideas and practices.<sup>1</sup> How this might be possible

<sup>1</sup> For a rather unfavorable view of religion in this respect, see Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 230 ff. A somewhat more circumspect account is given in Jastrow, *The Study of Religion*. For concrete illustrations of the general relation between religion and secular culture see the monumental works of Draper and of A. D. White, *A History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, and *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*. The latter work especially is one of much erudition and entrancing interest.



will, I hope, become more explicit as we seek to determine somewhat more positively the general sort of influence which religion exerts upon the rest of a man's life.

Religion implies ethical attitudes. It will perhaps aid us to do this if we recall the main theoretical, emotional and active features which we found religion, especially in its higher forms, to contain. We proposed, as a sort of general description of religion, the statement that it was an emotion based upon the conviction that the events of the universe are controlled in view of a supreme and lasting good, and an attitude of coöperation with the Power in the universe making for this good. Religion, we said, in the first place offers a certain theory of the world which purports to be true; and second, it contains certain ethical or mandatory features which seek to bind men's conduct.

The historical connection between religion and morality. That moral codes are intimately associated with religion in the history of morality, moral laws being conceived as divine commands, is a fact too notorious to require support or argument here. The Hebrew religion, whose moral code was

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

ascribed directly to the will of God, is perhaps the clearest and best-known example. According to some writers, all the important historical systems of morality have been thus associated with religious ideas and sanctions; in other words, the historical connection between religion and morality, whatever may be said of their intrinsic connection, has been universal. The actual force of theological beliefs over conduct has doubtless often been overestimated. As a consequence of this, there is at present a decided tendency to underestimate their influence. One hears much nowadays of the autonomy of the moral life. The motives for moral action, it is said, are human motives like the happiness of the individual and of society. And even when action is not consciously motived at all, as it frequently is not, it can be explained by a rich background of instincts, impulses and habits which furnish the driving forces, so to speak, of the moral life. The active life of an individual has a large amount of intrinsic tendency, strain and thrust, and it maintains itself, and continues its progress, without the religious

## RELIGION AND MORALITY

---

motivation of which we have in the past made so much.

The motives  
of action:  
sanctions  
of morality.

It is not to be denied that there is an important element of truth in this contention. Many actions are doubtless motivated by a desire for the welfare of the individual, and of those who surround him, without reference to extra-mundane consequences; many more are aimed at particular objects without much thought even of their bearing upon welfare either present or future; still others are due to various instincts and impulses which crave expression, and which get themselves expressed without much interference on the part of consciousness. In other words, there is much that is merely subconscious or even automatic in conduct, which it has been the merit of modern ethics clearly to point out.

The motivation of human conduct, as will be seen, is a highly complicated affair, and cannot be explained by the exclusive employment of any one principle of motivation or a single sanction. It will therefore be helpful if we make at this point a rather complete inventory of the various dynamic influences

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

which act as the driving forces of human conduct. These may be divided, in the first place, into habits and ideas, using habits roughly to stand for the whole category of impulses, instincts, acquired habits, and other forms of automatic or semi-automatic forms of motivation referred to above, and ideas for the more or less clearly conceived considerations which prompt us to a given kind of conduct. Ethical writers, since the time of Bentham, have been accustomed to divide the latter kind of motives, or "sanctions," as they are often called, into four great classes: (a) Physical sanctions, such as the remembered ill feeling following a debauch; (b) legal, such as legal punishment; (c) social, such as public opinion; and (d) religious, such as the hope of divine approval, and the fear of punishment. The religious sanctions, it will be observed, are closely related to the legal and social, inasmuch as the approval and good opinion of God are sought, as well as the punishment and reward of the divine law are dreaded and hoped for. The religious sanctions might accordingly be divided into two kinds, the lower and the higher, the fear of

punishment and the hope of reward, on the one hand, and the motives of love and reverence, on the other. The progressive substitution of the higher motives for the lower ones with the advance of culture and sophistication marks the evolution of religion from its lower to its higher forms. In the higher and more refined forms of the religious mood we are prompted to conform ourselves to God's will because we reverence and love him rather than because we hope for rewards or fear his punishment, much as in the higher relations between parents and children, established by a long process of educative treatment, obedience on the part of children is rendered freely, love having cast out fear. In the higher regions of morality, indeed, as the poet Schiller so eloquently urged, the sharp contrast between duty and inclination, law and freedom, becomes more and more obscured: not inclination and duty, but inclination to duty, is the ideal constitution of man. Thus grace and beauty of conduct supplant the unlovely austerity of the life of reluctant obedience to duty. Everyone has known some of those attractive characters from whose life every trace of discord and

obstruction has been removed, for whom duty has become a grateful and pleasant exercise:

“Glad hearts without reproach or blot,  
Who do Thy work and know it not.”

Such personalities are indeed the ripest fruit of moral discipline. “When we see a soul,” says Emerson, “whose acts are regal, graceful, and pleasant as roses, we must thank God that such things can be and are, and not turn sourly on the angel and say: Crump is the better man, with his grunting resistance to all his native devils.”

Religion  
primarily a  
conservative  
influence.

The statement, however, that actions are often motivated or checked by religious considerations does not after all carry us far. All depends, of course, upon the character of the actions which religion sanctions, or of which it disapproves. A common opinion, for example, associates religion with moral progress, either holding that all moral codes originated in the will of God, or under some sort of religious auspices, or else suggesting that religion has much to do with the initiation of ethical progress. The study of the history of religion and morality fails, on the whole, to support this view.

Religion, both as regards its relation to morality and to science, must be regarded as mainly a conservative force.<sup>1</sup> As such it has doubtless often retarded progress, checking freedom of thought and ethical initiative. The progress of the emancipation of science and morality from sacerdotal control is indeed still going on, though the victory may be said to be fairly won for secularism in every department. Magic has yielded to medicine, astrology to astronomy, alchemy to chemistry, authoritative morality to ethical autonomy, theology to philosophy. It is worthy of notice, however, that the whole conception of religion as a conservative force rests upon a narrow and rather arbitrary definition of religion. What ought rather to be said is that historical theology in its more unprogressive representatives has been conservative and opposed to progress. Otherwise the whole distinction between progress and conservatism becomes useless as applied to religion. What if we said (as we might very well say) that

<sup>1</sup> This does not apply to the earlier history of civilization when, as is well known, science and morality were largely under the tutelage of religion, and owed their progress largely to their connection with ceremonial and hieratic practices.

many men have made progress their duty and their religion? Certainly many important contributors to science have been religious persons, and it would certainly be somewhat unconventional to call such moral reformers as Socrates and Jesus, Luther and Zwingli, irreligious or unreligious!

Besides, the statement that religion is mainly a conservative force does not by itself necessarily disparage religion. Conservation of the past is itself an essential factor in progress. Gravitation, too, is in a sense a conservative force. And a machine runs more evenly with the incubus of a heavy fly-wheel than it would without it. Society needs both the innovator and the conservator. Which is the more useful it would be impossible to say in the abstract. All depends on what they contribute and what they seek to save. For respectable mediocrity they are both madmen: they often become social outcasts. The task of the conservator is usually the more thankless, inasmuch as society rarely realizes the value of his efforts either during his life or after his demise. The innovator's life is at least more interesting and



exciting. Aside from the mental stimulus of fresh discovery, his life is one of incessant conflict, both with the reactionary and the stationary factions of society. Frequently he is stoned to death, and posterity sometimes raises a monument to his memory. The conservator usually pines away in isolation and vain regret, a slower and more painful death. Both ought to be allowed to live in peace and honor. But no man's life is safe. Even the "conservative progressive," who seeks to keep his mind open both to the past and to the future, is likely to be injured by missiles flying between the two opposing camps, or even to have both enemies join in a temporary alliance against him.

Reasons  
for this.

The reason why religion as an institution does not lead morality but rather follows it is simple enough when a fundamental psychological principle is firmly grasped. As was pointed out in another connection, in discussing the dogma of revelation, the mind cannot grasp anything which its experience has not prepared it for. A man cannot step beyond the bounds of his experience any more than he can leap out of his

own skin. For the ignorant Italian fruit-vender the art treasures of the Holy City are non-existent, and the armies of the world have trampled its streets in vain. Trees do not grow in the air. Neither are our conceptions of the deity manufactured out of whole cloth, nor do they come out of the blue. They are gotten simply from the interpretation of our experiences as these come to us in our contact with nature and with men. Men's conceptions of the ethical attributes of God cannot rise above the ethical experiences and conceptions common to humanity. We cannot even penetrate directly to the ethical motives of another man; all we can ever do is to infer them from his actions as we observe them, and if a man or God should act from motives more refined than any which have ever actuated us, they would remain as completely unknown to us as colors to a man congenitally blind.

The moral ideal once objectified by its association with the person of God acquires a certain stability which tends to counteract the fluctuations to which lesser and more detached ethical norms are liable. The influ-

ence, indeed, of the belief in an all-powerful and all-seeing God, when implicitly held, exerts a reflex influence upon conduct the importance of which cannot easily be over-estimated. The process referred to has been well described by Fowler and Wilson: "When a sincere belief in the existence of a being with such attributes has once originated, it is calculated to react forcibly upon the character of the worshipers. In part itself the product of the moral nature, the belief reacts on the feelings which contributed to produce it. Morality lends to the object of religious regard its most endearing attributes, and receives in turn a sacred and venerable character, appealing especially to our feelings of reverence and awe. Many of the moral virtues have been thus transformed, acquiring thereby a different and a loftier character."<sup>1</sup>

It will have appeared, however, from what has been said so far, that the special function of religion in relation to morality is not to create new ethical ideas, nor to prescribe ethical norms not already recognized by the common ethical feelings of mankind, but

<sup>1</sup> The Principles of Morals, pp. 345-6.

rather to add its sanction, and thus to re-enforce such ethical ideals and norms as already exist. As is often said, it furnishes additional motivation to right conduct.

Religion renders action more vigorous through the release of unused energies.

Precisely how this process takes place is a matter which remains for a somewhat fuller explanation. The main points may be briefly indicated in conclusion.

(1) If the direction of a man's life is on the whole ethical, it cannot but receive a vast access of reënforcement and momentum from the idea of such a powerful and just being as the religious imagination pictures God to be. This occurs, in the first place, through the release of energies not normally brought into requisition. There are in every man submerged and pent-up sources of energy which are rarely tapped and drawn upon, the higher degrees of possible activity being for some psychological reason pretty completely inhibited or broken. Professor James has described this with surpassing skill in his widely read essay, *The Energies of Men*.<sup>1</sup> "As a rule,"

<sup>1</sup> Printed in somewhat varying forms in the *Philosophical Review* for January 1907, and the *American Magazine* for October 1907; the latter article is also reprinted in James' posthumous volume, *Memories and Studies*, p. 229 ff.

he says, "men habitually use only a small part of the powers which they actually possess and which they might use under appropriate conditions. Most of us feel as if a sort of cloud weighed upon us, keeping us below our highest notch of clearness in discernment, sureness in reasoning, or firmness in deciding. Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half awake. Our fires are damped, our drafts are checked." Every one can recall unfortunate individuals in life or in literature whose lives have become a tissue of disabilities, misgivings and regrets. Excessive reflectiveness,<sup>1</sup> moral obliquity,<sup>2</sup> the consciousness of being out of harmony with our surroundings, accustomed associations, habits and the conventions of society are among the most common causes of such conative impotence; but the causes are too numerous and compli-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Shakespeare:

And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pitch and moment,  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action. Hamlet, Act III, sc. I.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Browning, Paracelsus:

Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,  
But let grow up and wind around a will  
Till action was destroyed.

cated to go into minutely here. Of more interest for our present purpose is the question of the way existing inhibitions are removed. In general, James says, "excitements, ideas and efforts . . . are what carry us over the dam." Of the more acute conditions which precipitate the will, rendering possible free and vigorous action, James names love, anger, crowd-contagion, sometimes despair, brandy, opium, a spree, a vow or an oath, a fiat of will, prayer, and the like. Among verbal phrases which are potent in setting free pent-up energies are fatherland, the flag, the union, the holy church, the Monroe doctrine, truth, science, liberty, Rome or death, etc. Of prayer James says: "Relatively few medical men and scientific men, I fancy, can pray. Few can carry on living commerce with 'God.' Yet many of us are well aware of how much freer and abler our lives would be, were such important forms of energizing not sealed up by the critical atmosphere in which we have been reared." And of conversion: "Conversions . . . form another way in which bound energies are let loose. They unify us, and put a stop to ancient mental interfer-

## RELIGION AND MORALITY

---

ences. The result is freedom, and often a great enlargement of power.”<sup>1</sup>

Hence its  
heroisms.

There is no doubt that religious ideas, not necessarily ideas of future reward or punishment, nor even ideas of God’s approval or disapproval, but the general idea that one is not waging the battle of life alone, but in allegiance with the supreme power in the universe, is an operative force of the first order in the indirect sense we have suggested. The deeds of heroism and adventure which religious ideas have inspired have been numerous and striking, and have largely made history the stirring and eventful thing that it is. The energies released by religion, often explosive and spectacular in their manifestations, have displayed themselves in a thousand forms, in fasting, flagellation, persecution, various acts of heroism, such as the renunciation of worldly goods and worldly pleasures, and in those massive movements which number among the most striking and momentous events in history, crusades, religious reformations, religious wars, etc. The influx of energy due to religion has steadied men’s

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 261 and 258.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

resolution in desert, dungeon and cell, and has enabled them to meet unflinchingly the terrors of the cross and the stake. And unnumbered acts of heroism and endurance of a private kind, too homely and too irrelevant to the interests of humanity to be noticed by history, have been enacted uncomplainingly under the inspiration of religion. Often there appears such a powerful sense of endurance and sacrifice as actually to make the devotee long for suffering and privations: "Invested with an invincible courage," says Saint John of the Cross, "filled with an impassioned desire to suffer for its God, the soul then is seized with a strange torment—that of not being allowed to suffer enough."<sup>1</sup> Saint Teresa's account rings equally true: "Often infirm and wrought upon with dreadful pains before the ecstasy, the soul emerges from it full of health and admirably disposed for action. . . . The soul, after such a favor, is animated with a degree of courage so great that if at that moment its body should be torn to pieces for the cause of God, it would

<sup>1</sup> *Œuvres*, II, p. 320; quoted by James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 414.



feel nothing but the liveliest comfort. Then it is that promises and heroic resolutions spring up in profusion in us," etc.<sup>1</sup> The most common entries in the reported accounts of deep religious experiences are a sense of assurance, of harmony, willingness to endure, intellectual luminosity, happiness and love, and a vast access of energy, rendering its possessor capable of great heroisms and feats of endurance. These accounts are not only very numerous in the literature of confession and devotion, but are entirely consonant with our modern psychological knowledge of the probable effect upon action of such ideas as are here in question.

And its  
art.            One of the most striking and most interesting ways in which religion has contributed to civilization is through the stimulus and vitality which it has imparted to the artistic impulse. One cannot but be struck, when one reviews the great art treasures of the world, in architecture, painting, and music, particularly, with the enormous part which religion has played in the productions of these noble achievements. It is not

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*

exaggerating the matter in the least to say that many of the most elaborate and consummate works of art owe their origin directly to religious ideas and emotions. It would be an endless task to give examples. The vast quantity and the very high grade of art due directly to the Christian religion justifies the statement that the influence of Christ is not so much impressed upon, as plowed into, modern life and civilization.

There are two or three further characteristics of religion which fit it admirably for the energy-releasing function of which we have made so much, and which might be briefly mentioned in conclusion.

Mystery  
and moral  
power. One is the element of mystery which religion contains. It is a true psychological instinct which prompts the church to surround its ritual and ceremony with mystery. Everyone must have felt the feeling of vagueness and vastness which is produced by the dimly lighted edifice, the murmured prayer, the unknown tongue of the ritual, the mysterious ceremony. The emotional condition thus produced is a valuable requisite for the profounder acts of communion

with God, and for the influx of ethical energy of which we have spoken. Nor is the production of the impression of mystery illegitimate. The universe is not a simple problem in arithmetic: it is a mystery, and a mystery which has not grown less obscure with the passing of time. It is only the man of shallow intelligence, who has never spent a genuine thought on the great problems by which we are surrounded on every hand, who can regard the world with complacency, as something which the intellect of man has penetrated and understood.

The stimu-  
lus of  
prestige.

A further way in which religion releases unused energies is by teaching man his importance, as well as his finiteness and littleness. The work of salvation will not be accomplished without man's active coöperation. He is a co-worker with God. The realization of this adds a sense of dignity and responsibility to man's life which cannot but stimulate him to higher and more energetic conduct. Science will not do well if it teaches man, as it often does, that the future of the universe and of human history is a fatal and necessary product of "the click-clack move-

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

ments of nature's laws," rather than, partly, at least, the result of man's aspirations and acts. Man may be merely an ephemeral feature, a bird on the mountain, or a weed by the wall: but if he learns this lesson too well, it will be his undoing.

The sug-  
gestive  
force of  
personality.

A last feature of religion which lends it peculiar ethical force is the personal element which is such a striking element in the Hebrew, Christian, and other higher forms of religion. Every one knows from personal experience how much an ethical ideal gains in suggestive force if it is embodied in the form of a person whom one respects and admires. A personality, in order to influence conduct, need not be a living personage, nor even an historical one. It is well known what a leading part the characters of fictitious literature, mere products of the fancy, play in the lives of many persons. The "ideal companion," as James has well called this personage, may be the object of religious faith and the religious imagination.

And there is no doubt that human morality has benefited to an enormous degree through the concretion which its moral ideals have

received in the person or persons who become the objects of religious belief and adoration. The suggestive force of the idea of God is due not only to the sublime character which is attributed to him; this suggestive force is greatly augmented by the influence of great masses of humanity who have accorded their loyalty and support to this object of their religious belief and worship. The cumulative force of tradition, and the contagious effect of social suggestion, in other words, contribute very importantly to give the idea of God the enormous moral and emotional force which it possesses. Without such an unseen personal companion and guide, morality often degenerates into a calculating selfishness. With this personal companionship and support, the individual goes forth to conquer himself and the world, and to bring them under the dominion of the ideal.

### LITERATURE

- Bowne, Principles of Ethics, Chapter VII.  
Caird, Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion, Chapter IX.  
Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution*.  
Höfding, *Philosophy of Religion*, IV, especially pp. 322-31.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

Janet, Theory of Morals, Chapter XII.

Jastrow, A Study of Religion.

King, The Development of Religion, Chapters X–XI.

Ladd, Philosophy of Conduct, Chapter XXIV.

Paulsen, System of Ethics, Book II, Chapter VIII.

Pfleiderer, Philosophy and Development of Religion,  
Volume I, Chapter II.

Seth, Ethical Principles, Part III, Chapters II–III.

Wundt, Ethics, Part I, Chapter II.

VIII

THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE





## VIII

### THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

Summary of  
the fore-  
going.

I have sought, in the preceding, to outline, with a few main strokes, the salient features of a world view upon which religion, if it is to continue to appeal to thinking men, must, as it seems to me, be based. Reducing these features to their lowest possible terms, we might designate them as metaphysical idealism and moral optimism. Such a philosophy, it cannot be too strongly urged, cannot undertake to contradict the established facts of science, but must seek somehow to include them. It is not the business of philosophy to add to the stock of knowledge already accumulated by the sciences. All it can ever do is to take a synoptic view of them, and to seek to interpret them, to trace out their bearings upon the great questions of the world and of life which no thinking man can long evade,—the fundamental constitution of the universe, the place of man in reality as a whole, the existence and nature of God, the survival of the self beyond death, the permanence of goodness, and the

like. These are indeed insistent and momentous questions, and unless we give some kind of answer to them, all our science and our life will remain rather unintelligent and useless, like a ship without a steering gear, or a body without a brain.

Such an interpretation of the facts and categories of science we have in the foregoing sought to make. We have tried to keep intact the scientific concepts of matter and mechanical causation, but we have sought to interpret these as illustrations of spirit, as relatively external and subordinate features, like the notes of a symphony, or the words of a drama, without meaning or significance until they are viewed in their organic connection with the plan and purpose of the whole to which they belong.<sup>1</sup> Final causes, ends or purposes,

<sup>1</sup> While I am writing this, a child of six is interesting herself by copying painstakingly with a typewriter from a book lying on the table. The book is Mr. Dickinson's *Religion, A Criticism and a Forecast*. The sentence which the child has just finished reads: "I have urged that there is only one method of knowledge, that of experience and legitimate inference from experience," a statement unmeaning to the child, but fraught with significance for the philosopher. The illustration is not inapt, I think, to illustrate the difference between a rigorously descriptive and explanatory science, which contents itself with a transcription of reality, and philosophy and literature, which seek to interpret the meaning of phenomena for life as a whole.

dominate nature, though they work through efficient causes, through means and instruments. The uniformity of nature is an undoubted fact, but this fact does not mean fate, but freedom. Without constancies in nature, man's knowledge and activity would be alike at an end, and all his purposes and interests would become at once incapable of realization. Evolution, too, is a phenomenon of unquestioned authenticity, and of universal scope, but evolution is not mere change, without rhyme or reason, issuing nowhere. And there is much apparent evil in the world, many opaque hindrances and obstructions in the path of our purposes; but it is easy to see that life would be insipid and worthless for an active being like man if every wish were followed by immediate fulfillment, to say nothing of the confusion and social disaster which would follow upon the gratification of every desire, no matter how private or selfish. And if there remain disappointments which are both cruel and unavoidable, these can be explained, even if not completely justified, by the knowledge that man is only a part, not the whole; that he performs a limited

function in a vast scheme of things, the complete purpose of which, even if he does his best, he can only partly subserve. And in so far as he fails in fitting himself to the larger plan, either through ignorance or defect of will, he may eventually succumb to the larger purpose and the higher good. But such a consummation a man, if he is sufficiently courageous and good, cannot ultimately disapprove. Still, it must be confessed that the belief that the deepest plan of the universe provides for the eventual and decisive triumph of good is and must remain a matter for faith and hope, rather than a conviction based upon positive knowledge. Thus does all our philosophy end in a minor chord, leaving us with a vague sense of uneasiness, mixed with a prevailing mood of strength and hope. Religion based upon philosophy can never degenerate into a complacent optimism. It will be, to use the words of a gifted writer, "a religion not of sunshine or darkness, but of the starry twilight, tremulous with hopes and fears, wistful, adventurous, passionate, divining a horizon more mysterious and vast than day or night can suggest, from uncertainty conjuring pos-

sibility, from doubt evoking inspiration." With such a religion man will pass through life "as a man may float down an unknown river in the dusk, risking and content to risk his fortunes and his life on the chance of a discovery more wonderful even than the most audacious of his dreams."<sup>1</sup>

Still, it is a fact of the utmost importance for religion that man does *not* merely drift or float, but that the betterment of his condition is largely in his own hands, that the substitution of the ethical process for the cosmical process, as Huxley expresses it, is possible through his own active endeavors. Man's environment is not opaque and unyielding, like a stone wall, it is something plastic to man's moral ideals and aspirations. The Power in the universe overruling events for good, of which we spoke in our definition of religion, is not some external force, acting upon things from without: it is immanent in the very heart of things. It manifests itself, I should say, in two great phenomena upon which theism must ultimately rest: the uniformity of nature, in virtue of which we can understand it and act

<sup>1</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

successfully upon it, and the free will of man, which can initiate action in conformity with ideals. Our acts, as James forcibly says somewhere, are turning places, growing places, as it were, of the world, where we catch reality in the making. To a universe so constituted man cannot reasonably object.

Religion has had a long history, and has undergone many changes in outward form and in doctrine, all of which it has survived. Men have long abandoned the absurd notion of the eighteenth century that it is the invention of priests, and have learned that it is rooted in the deepest instincts and experiences of man's life. That religion will undergo further developments is also certain, but its inner spirit will remain the same, and its central conviction, the conviction that the world is good, will only grow in strength as men come to understand their experience more completely. From present indications, the religion of the future will show the following characteristics, all of which seem to be more or less permanent achievements of man's intellectual and spiritual history.

## THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

---

The religion  
of the  
future  
will be  
theistic.

(1) The religion of the future will be theistic and personalistic, rather than pantheistic, positivistic or merely humanitarian. In all these forms God as a personal spirit is either ruled out, or else sublimated to such a point as to amount to little more than a physical force, a principle of unity, the form of moral order, or a similar phenomenon. But such an entity, however useful it may prove to express certain important phases of the universe, will perhaps not express it completely enough to satisfy the intellectual need of many thoughtful men, and will function only feebly in its influence upon conduct. "He reckons ill," said Pindar, speaking from the point of view of practice, "who leaves God out"; but it is doubtful whether philosophy, as a purely intellectual discipline, will be able entirely to dispense with the theistic hypothesis. To say this is not to say that religion will be anthropomorphic, in a crude and bald sense of that term. It will, of course, not think of God "as an enlarged and glorified man, who walks in the garden in the cool of the day, or as a judge deciding between human litigants, or as a

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

king, Pharaoh or emperor, ruling arbitrarily his subjects.”<sup>1</sup> Still, if we are to have any notion of God at all, we must interpret him in terms of our own experience, and we shall naturally attribute to Him those fundamental traits which make up our own spiritual life, and in terms of which, as we held in an earlier section, all reality must ultimately be interpreted: intelligence and will. Thus all our philosophy and religion will continue to show certain anthropomorphic features. Anthropomorphism or complete agnosticism seem to be the inevitable alternatives which we eventually have to face. That God’s thought will not be as our thought, and that His purpose will outrun and overlap all human purposes, goes without saying. But if we are to trace his thought at all, as this is revealed in nature, and if we are to fathom his will, we can do so only by helping ourselves with such categories and conceptions as are furnished us in our human experience.<sup>2</sup>

The assertion of the existence of God as a principle of intelligence and will is so far-

<sup>1</sup> C. W. Eliot, *The Religion of the Future*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the similar view of Paulsen in his *Introduction to Philosophy*.



reaching in its consequences that it cannot but provoke mental objections, especially on the part of those who have thought themselves pretty thoroughly weaned from the anthropomorphism of traditional theology. The objection will inevitably be raised that we have no evidence for the existence of such a world soul as has been here proposed. It is plain that all depends upon what is meant by the terms "soul" and "evidence." We have of course no visible or direct evidence of any kind of such a universal spirit or soul. But neither do we have any visible or direct evidence of anybody's soul. The only way I can be assured of the existence of my friend's soul is through the rationality and consistency of his words and his actions. Beyond these I can never penetrate. We have no assurance that Shakespeare possessed a soul except the high degree of rationality evidenced by his literary productions. We have no evidence for the intelligent origin of a complicated mechanism except the delicate adaptation of means to ends, of the detailed parts to the plan and function of the whole. It is the same kind of evidence, precisely, upon which

we must depend for the belief in God as a principle of intelligence and rational will. The only argument which we can adduce, and the only argument we need, for a Universal Reason is the universal rationality of things, just as the only reason we can adduce for the existence of a Universal Goodness is the prevalence of goodness in the world, the fundamental righteousness of things. This is so obvious, I take it, as to require no further argument, and I am content to rest the case here.

And human-  
istic.

(2) The religion of the future will continue to be anthropocentric or humanistic, in the sense that man will continue to be the center of its interest. To paraphrase Pindar's line, he reckons ill, too, who leaves man out. Man will not be regarded as the only object of nature, but he must be regarded as an object, since he is here. And if we are guided by what evolution has to teach about the relative grade of nature's forms, as indicated by their structure and office, rather than by considerations of a false modesty so often affected by pseudo-science, we may even assert man to be the highest object so far attained in the part of

the world which we know. And it would hardly be good scientific form to speculate about higher grades of being and more perfect creations in other parts of the universe, concerning which we have no knowledge whatsoever. Any philosophy, in fact, which leaves man out, or proves man's life and mind to be ephemeral and insignificant features of the world, is so patently self-contradictory that it cannot hope to gain men's serious hearing or assent. No being like man who can compass both himself and the world, and who can assign his own place in the world, can be insignificant. He can at best only be temporarily deceived, or else acquire the bad habit of make-believe and stage play. This habit he undoubtedly possesses, but it is so obvious a weakness of mental character that the common sense of mankind is not seriously deceived by it.

It will be  
progressive.

(3) Future religion will be free and progressive. It will never again rest upon absolute authority, whether of a book or an ecclesiastical system. Religious truth will never be closed, so that it will not be capable of extension or of revision; it will be progressive

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

and flexible, adjusting itself constantly to new discoveries and insights, no matter from what direction they may come. And religion will not receive the results of genuine investigation grudgingly, but will eagerly welcome new truth, confident that its interests can never be served by falsification or by indirection, but that truth must be good, no matter what the issues are to which it seems to lead. The brilliant saying of Emerson, that "the immortality of the conclusion spares us the trouble of examining the argument,"<sup>1</sup> is perhaps no more than a tacit assumption which underlies both science and common sense, and without which all our investigations would cease.

(4) Religion will continue to  
It will express  
itself through  
institutions. express itself through institutions,  
achieving its aims through organized as well as through private effort. But the religious organization will never again be regarded as an end in itself, and it will never again dominate and suppress the individuals who compose it, for whom it exists, and from

<sup>1</sup> Hitherto, in so far as the writer knows, unpublished. It was communicated from personal recollections of Emerson by Mr. F. B. Sanborn, of Concord.

## THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

---

whom alone it derives its vitality and strength. There will be no hereditary priesthood, but the deliverance of every man will carry what force it will in virtue of its intrinsic truth and spiritual power. Might will still be right, but the might will not be physical, but rational and spiritual.

It will be ethical. (5) The religion of the future will be ethical and redemptive, rather than merely passive and contemplative. And while humanitarian effort and relief will never constitute the whole of religion, the ethical and practical constituent will continue to be, as it always has been, a central element of the religious life. Without its ministry to the needy and the suffering, without any interest in the raising of man's material and social condition, without a strong message of righteousness and noble living, religion can never attain to its greatest strength and usefulness as a social institution.

The romance of religion. (6) But, lastly, religion will never become merely an intellectual point of view, or an ethical or social propaganda, for the simple reason that man is not a mere combination of intellect and will. Religion

grows out of man's total need, and it will never be complete until it serves man's needs completely. Man is and will be a sentimental being, passionate, hopeful, creative, unsatisfied with the present, and ever constructing in his dreams images of the unattained. It is this power of seeing things "which never were on land or sea" which raises him, more than does any other intellectual gift, above his fellow creatures. It is the imaginative exuberance of religion, its noble redundancy, the very thing which makes it a stumbling block to sober science, that accounts for its perennial appeal to the best minds. I take this poetic element in religion to be, not an element of weakness, but rather of strength and vitality. Man's playful activities are always a symptom of abounding life. Art and poetry and religion do not flourish where man's powers are consumed in the hard struggle for existence.

In virtue of its imaginative element, its romance, religion becomes an ornament of life, and a prophesy. If science reveals to man the actual, poetry and religion show him the ideal. If science has disillusioned man, it is the function of poetry and religion to

re-illusion him, to hearten him by the revelation of better things than any yet attained. It is the sphere of the imagination which is the breeding ground of all our ideals, intellectual, ethical and aesthetic. If our acts are truly turning places, where we catch reality in the making, as James has so finely said, then we must remember that the incipient beginnings of all human acts, in so far as they are spontaneous and original, occur in the realm of the imagination. This, then, is the real workshop of being, where man can himself repeat and continue the act of creation, the highest function which man has attributed to the Absolute.

Will this sense of the eternal and the ideal ever be obliterated in man through his preoccupation with science and the practical, humdrum tasks of life? It is certain that it will not. Man will always be a poet and a prophet as well as a thinker. It is only as a poet, in fact, as Schiller somewhere suggests, that man is truly complete. The poetic and prophetic strain in him, because the deepest and most real element of his personality, nature will never permit to be lost.

## THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

---

“Just when we are safest, there’s a sunset-touch,  
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one’s death,  
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—  
And that’s enough for fifty hopes and fears  
As old and new as nature’s self,  
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,  
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,  
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—  
The grand Perhaps!”<sup>1</sup>

### LITERATURE

Dickinson, Religion, a Criticism and a Forecast.  
Eliot, The Religion of the Future.  
Sturt, The Idea of a Free Church.

<sup>1</sup> Browning, Bishop Blougram’s Apology.



## INDICES



## INDEX OF SUBJECTS

- Activity, as characteristic of mind, 31, 68-69, 79-81, 88-90; idea of, transferred to external nature, 90-91.
- Acts, motivation of, 194-98, 204; as creative of reality, 222, 231.
- Adaptation and happiness, 116.
- Anger, as stimulus to action, 206.
- Anthropomorphism, 82-3, 223-26.
- Arbitration, 151.
- Art, fine, 133, 189, 209-10.
- Association, Young Men's Christian, 26, n. 1.
- Bad, distinction between good and, 116-17.
- Bible, 8, 12-14, 36, 45-48, 227. See also Revelation.
- Biology, relation of, to philosophy, 11.
- Brain, function of, 161-66.
- Brotherhood movement, 26, n. 1.
- Causation, 10, 83-96. See also Law, Mechanism.
- Certitude, 171-72.
- Charity, 14.
- Church, 8, 14.
- Clergy, influence of, 15-16.
- Code, moral, 8.
- Coherence, as criterion of truth, 38.
- Conservator, 200-201.
- Consistency, 38.
- Conventions, 205.
- Conversion, 206-7.
- Creation, 10, 50-51, 100-101, 222, 231.
- Crime, as disease of social tissue, 154-55.
- Criminal, 154-55.
- Criticism, higher, 12.
- Crowd-contagion, 206.
- Death, 126-27, 159-84. See also Immortality.
- Desires, distinction between lower and higher, 116-17; as argument for immortality, 167; as basis of ethical distinctions, 116.
- Despair, as stimulus to action, 206.
- Disarmament, 151.
- Divorce, 17.
- Education, 14; moral and religious, 14-15, 16, n. 1, 32-33.
- Effort, 206.
- End. See Mechanism, Purpose, Teleology.
- Energies, unused, 204-13.
- Energy, conservation of matter and, 60, 174.
- Environment, not unyielding, 221.
- Ethics, religion and, 33-35, 51-2; evolutionary, 152; utilitarian, 152.
- Eugenics, 131-2.
- Evil, problem of, 50-51, 219-22.
- Evolution, 50, 71, 99-102, 105-8, 219, 226.
- Experience, as source of philosophy and theology, 37, 201-2; purposive features of, 68-9, 79, 81; as relational, 70; objects "outside of," 71-5, 79; distinction between finite and absolute, 72-5; absolute, 113.
- Family, 8.
- Finitude, death as due to, 175.
- Fittest, survival of, 10, 100, 152-3.
- God, as absolute experience, 72-5, 113; as contemplative, 75; as active, 75, 82; knowledge of, 115; as intelligence and will, 223-6; suggestive force of idea of, 213.

# INDICES

- Goodness of the world, 113-56,  
172-4, 221-2, 226.
- Habit, 196, 205.
- Happiness, activity and, 136-9;  
knowledge and, 141-6; love  
and, 146-8; as depending on  
adaptation to environment,  
116; common sources of,  
139-41.
- Heaven and hell, 168-9.
- Hereditv, 67-8, 127-8; social,  
132-4.
- Home, influence of, 16-17.
- Idealism, VII, VIII, 12, n. 1, 49,  
57-76, 217.
- Imitation, social, 41, 42-3, 191,  
213.
- Immortality, 159-84; mere as-  
surance of, unimportant, 160-  
61; arguments against, 161-  
66; proofs for, 166-71;  
ignorance concerning, not an  
evil, 171-2; bearing of, on the  
value of life, 172-4; condi-  
tional, 183-4.
- Impulses, 196.
- Individual, 228-9.
- Individualism, present-day, 8-9.
- Innovator, 200-201.
- Instincts, 196.
- Intuition, 36-42.
- Inventions, 133.
- Investigation, free, 20.
- Jesus, 52, 200.
- Justice, 168-9, 181.
- Knowledge, biological function  
of, 141-2; relation to happi-  
ness, 142-3; and desire, 144-6;  
of God, 115, 226.
- Law, natural, 9, 10, 83-108; and  
purpose, 95-8.
- Legislation, 191.
- Leisure, as source of happiness,  
136-7.
- Life, place of, in universe, 10-11;  
intensity of modern, 17; effects  
of, not lost, 174-6; intrinsic  
value of, 176-7; as adjust-  
ment to environment, 182.
- Liquor traffic, 9.
- Literature, 212.
- Love, as a source of happiness,  
146-8; as stimulus to action,  
206.
- Luther, 200.
- Machine, 92-3.
- Man, place of, in the universe,  
10-11, 30, 226-7. See also  
Mind.
- Marriage, 9.
- Materialism, 9-12, 49, 57-76;  
in psychology, 59-60; of  
science, 60-61. See also  
Mechanism.
- Matter, nature of, 62-8; rela-  
tion to mind, 62-3, 179; as  
object of inference, 66; not  
an independent reality, 70-71,  
79; related to human interests  
and purposes, 81-2.
- Mechanism, 9-12, 49-50, 79-109.  
See also Materialism.
- Memory, relation to future life,  
162-3.
- Metaphysics, relation to reli-  
gion, 13-14.
- Mind, unity of, 30-33, 79-81,  
189; activity of, 31, 68-9, 80-  
81, 104; as matter, 57-9; as  
the effect of matter, 59-61;  
place of, in the universe, 10-11,  
30, 60-61; survival of, 179-  
84; and body, 161-66.
- Miracle, 46, 98-9.
- Misery, causes of, 134-5.
- Morality, religion and, 187-214;  
sanctions of, 195-8; history of,  
149-51.
- Mystery, effect of, on moral  
energy, 210-211.
- Naturalism. See Materialism  
and Mechanism.
- Nature, uniformity of, 96, n. 1,  
219, 221; and the supernat-  
ural, 8, 98-9.
- Obliquity, moral, 205.
- Observation as source of truth,  
38.
- Opium, 206.

# INDICES

---

- Optimism, 113-156, 217.
- Organization, as ideal of knowledge, 38.
- Pain, physical, 135.
- Personality, suggestive force of, 212-13.
- Pessimism, 50-51, 113-56, 167.
- Philanthropy, 14.
- Philosophy, relation to religion, 13-14, 20-21, 33-6, 48-51.
- Physics, relation of, to philosophy, 11.
- Pleasure and pain, qualities of, 120.
- Poverty, 135.
- Power, source of the idea of, 87-91, 105; existence and meaning of, in the universe, 113-14.
- Pragmatism, 82.
- Prayer, 206, 210.
- Prestige, religion as conferring a sense of, 211-12.
- Priests, religion as the invention of, 222.
- Progress, 51, 119, 124; theological, 4; religion and, 18-19; moral, 148-56, 187.
- Psychology, faculty, 31, 189; of religion, 33-5; Hobbes' definition of, 58.
- Punishment, eternal, 168-9, 183.
- Purpose, 49-50, 86, 218-19; as an aspect of consciousness, 68-9, 79-81, 104. See also Teleology and Mechanism.
- Qualities, primary and secondary, 64-6.
- Realism, VII.
- Reflection, as a source of truth, 38.
- Reflectiveness, excessive, 205.
- Relations, 66-8; as "the work of the mind," 67; artificial view of, by Kant, 70.
- Religion, present position of, 3-21; various expressions of, 4; and science, 4, 33, 35; and philosophy, 13, 20-21, 33-6, 48-52; definitions of, 25-33; and theology, 25, 29, 33-5; and morality, 21, 26-29, 51-2, 187-214, 229; and ethics, 33-5; as implying ethical attitudes, 193-8; as a conservative influence, 198-204; releases unused energies, 204-13; of the future, 217-232; theistic, 223-6; humanistic, 226; progressive, 227-8; institutional, 228; as a form of sentiment, 25, 27-9, 229-32.
- Revelation, as progressive, 47-8; of God through nature and life, 47, 115. See also Bible.
- Rites, 190.
- Ritual, 210.
- Sabbath, 9.
- Sanitation, 151.
- Science, specialization of, 5-9; and theology, 35; and materialism, 57, 60-61; emancipation of, from theology, 199.
- Selection, natural, 10, 100; sexual, 127-32.
- Serfdom, 151.
- Slavery, 151.
- Spiritualism, 166.
- Spree, 206.
- Struggle, will to, 102-3.
- Suffrage, 151.
- Supernatural, 8, 98-9.
- Taboo, 190.
- Teleology, 9-12, 49-50, 79-109, 218-19. See also Mechanism, Law, Purpose.
- Theology, 4, 12, 29, 35-6.
- Tradition, 40, 41.
- Truth, source of, 35-48; as a growth, 38; vivacity as a test of, 39; as a social product, 41; how conveyed, 44; as objective, 45.
- Universe, and God, 73; unity of, 74-5.
- Unrest, religious, 3-5; causes of, 5-17.
- Utility, as criterion of goodness, 153, 188.

## INDICES

---

- Value, VIII, 34; of life, 113-56;  
of the transient, 176-7; independence of, on consciousness, 180.
- Variation, 100.
- Voluntarism, 82.
- Vow, 206.
- Wealth, 137-8.
- Welfare, pleasure feeling and, 124-5.
- Will, the world as, 83-108; to struggle, 102-3; freedom of, 97-8; as source of the idea of power, 87-91, 105.
- Zwingli, 200.

## INDEX OF AUTHORS

- Adler, F., 9, n. 2.  
 Alexander, S., 153, n. 1.  
 Angell, 81, n. 1.  
 Aristotle, 6, 75.  
 Arnold, M., 26, 29, n. 1.  
 Audubon, 128-9.  
 Bain, 31.  
 Baldwin, J. M., 132.  
 Bechstein, 128.  
 Bentham, J., 196.  
 Bergson, 12, n. 1.  
 Berkeley, VIII, 62, 68-9, 72, 80.  
 Bowne, B. P., 99, n. 1, 101, n. 1, 124.  
 Brinton, 190, n. 1.  
 Browning, 50, 107, 114, 138-39, 147, 172, 174, 178, 181, 205, n. 2, 232.  
 Burke, 18.  
 Butler, N. M., 9, n. 2.  
 Caird, E., 12, n. 1, 66, n. 2.  
 Caird, J., 12, n. 1.  
 Calkins, M. W., 62, n. 1, 66.  
 Carlyle, 118, 145, 172-3.  
 Coe, 15, n. 1.  
 Darwin, 39, 128, n. 1, 129.  
 Davenport, 132, n. 1.  
 Dewey and Tufts, 153, n. 1.  
 Dickinson, G. L., 169, 218, n. 1.  
 Draper, 192, n. 1.  
 Eden, 135, n. 1.  
 Eliot, C. W., 223-4.  
 Emerson, 48, 198, 228.  
 Erdmann, 58, n. 1.  
 Eucken, 12, n. 1.  
 Falckenberg, 58, n. 1, 62, n. 1.  
 Field, 132, n. 1.  
 Forsyth, Principal, 35.  
 Fowler and Wilson, 190, n. 1, 203.  
 Fraser, A. C., 62, n. 1.  
 Galloway, 30, n. 1, 31.  
 Galton, F., 132, n. 1.  
 Goethe, 136, 176.  
 Gross, 70, n. 1.  
 Herodotus, 137-8.  
 Hobbes, 58.  
 Höfding, 58, n. 1, 62, n. 1.  
 Humboldt, W. von, 188.  
 Hume, 27, 69, 86-7.  
 Huxley, 221.  
 James, W., 12, n. 1, 31, 81, n. 1, 96, 145-6, 163, 164, 167, n. 1, 204, 206, 208, n. 1, 212, 222.  
 Jastrow, J., 167, n. 1.  
 Jastrow, M., 30, n. 1, 192, n. 1.  
 Judd, 81, n. 1.  
 Kant, VIII, 61, 66-8, 69-70.  
 Kellicott, 132, n. 1, 168.  
 Külpe, 81, n. 1.  
 Landor, 178.  
 Lange, 53, n. 1.  
 Lecky, 139.  
 Leibniz, 6, 103, n. 1.  
 Lodge, Sir O., 143.  
 Mackenzie, J. S., 28, 153, n. 1.  
 Marshall, R., 133, n. 1.  
 Martineau, 90-91.  
 McDougall, 131, n. 1.  
 McTaggart, J. E., 12, n. 1, 13, 25, 30, n. 1, 117, n. 1, 123, 165, n. 1.  
 Mezes, 153, n. 1.  
 Mill, J. S., 27, 134, 147.  
 Morgan, C. L., 129, n. 1.  
 Morris, 66, n. 2.  
 Muirhead, 29, n. 1, 153, n. 1.  
 Münsterberg, 9, n. 1.  
 Myers, F. W., 114, n. 1.  
 Pater, W., 70-1.  
 Paulsen, F., 12, n. 1, 58-9, 66, n. 2, 103, 120, n. 1, 138, n. 1, 153, n. 1, 174, 221, n. 2.  
 Pearson, K., 132, n. 1.  
 Perry, R. B., 30.  
 Rashdall, H., 73.  
 Royce, J., 12, n. 1, 81, n. 1.

## INDICES

---

- Sabatier, 3.  
Salleby, 132, n. 1.  
Sanborn, 228, n. 1.  
Schiller, Friedrich, 197, 231.  
Schiller, F. C. S., 166.  
Schopenhauer, 104, n. 1.  
Schurman, J. G., 43-4, 66, n. 2.  
Seth, J., 153, n. 1.  
Shakespeare, 89, 121, n. 1, 205,  
n. 1.  
Sidgwick, H., 153, n. 1.  
Simmel, 153, n. 1.  
Sisson, 14.  
Sorley, 153, n. 1.  
Spencer, 153, n. 1.  
Spinoza, 28.  
Stephen, L., 153, n. 1.  
Stout, 81, 81, n. 1, 171.  
Sully, 81, n. 1.  
Taylor, A. E., 12, n. 1, 102, n. 1,  
183-4.  
Tennyson, 73, 108, 114, 181.  
Titchener, 81, n. 1.  
Tylor, 190, n. 1.  
Überweg, 58, n. 1.  
Wallace, W., 66, n. 2.  
Ward, J., 12, n. 1, 136, n. 1.  
Watson, J., 66, n. 2.  
Weber, 58, n. 1, 103, n. 1.  
Westermarck, 150, n. 1.  
Whetham, 132, n. 1.  
Whetham, Mrs., 132, n. 1.  
White, A. D., 192, n. 1.  
Wilm, 15, n. 1, 16, n. 1, 103, n. 1,  
182, n. 1.  
Windelband, 165, n. 1.  
Wright C. D., 135, n. 1.  
Wundt, 81, 81, n. 1.

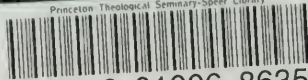








Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01006 8635